MIDAS AND SON

STEPHEN McKENNA

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MIDAS AND SON

STEPHEN McKENNA

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BY

STEPHEN McKENNA

AUTHOR OF "SONIA," "NINETY-SIX HOURS' LEAVE," ETC.

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TO
ELIZABETH

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb,
and naked shall I return thither."

JOB I, 21

Vix spes ipse suas animo capit, aurea fingens
Omnia. Gaudenti mensas posuere ministri,
Extructas dapibus, nec tostæ frugis egentes:
Tum vero, sive ille sua cerealia dextra
Munera contigerat, Cerealia dona rigebant;
Sive dapes avido convellere dente parabat,
Lammina fulva dapes, admoto dente, nitebant.
Miscuerat puris auctorem muneris undis:
Fusile per rictus aurum fluitare videres.
Attonitus novitate mali, divesque miserque,
Effugere optat opes, et, quæ modo voverat, odit.
Copia nulla famem relevat: sitis arida guttur
Urit, et inviso meritus torquetur ab auro.
(Ad cælumque manus, et splendida bracchia tollens)
"Da veniam, Lanæe pater! peccavimus"; inquit
"Sed miserere, precor, speciosque eripe damno."

Ovid, "Metamorphoses," XI, 118–133.

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MIDAS AND SON

CHAPTER I

SI VIEILLESSE SAVAIT . . .

Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on.
SAMUEL BUTLER: Essays on Life, Art and Science.

I

As Sir Aylmer Lancing's car wound between the high banks of rhododendrons which skirted the two-mile drive to Ripley Court, he leaned forward critically to catch a glimpse of the preparations for his son's return to England. For two years all but the south-east wing of the great Elizabethan house had been closed; he had been wheeled from his bedroom on the ground floor to the study, estate-room or office, thence to the dining-room and back again to bed without the strength or wish once to penetrate the sound-proof double doors which divided and screened him from the panelled central hall and the far south-western wing where his son's library and music-room were situated. In two years the twelve-foot front door, surmounted by the Stornaway arms, had never been publicly opened; Sir Aylmer and the vicarious philanthropists who were his only visitors came and went by the side entrance leading to the Chapel.

To-day every blind was up, every window shone in the treacherous February sunlight, and the front door was unbarred and open. Thick spirals of smoke curled from unfamiliar chimneys, and the housemaids in print dresses passed and repassed before newly open windows. The magic of spring, which had already coaxed scattered clusters of snowdrops from the sodden earth, seemed to be waking the winter-bound house itself to life; and, as the car slowed down at the side door and Sir Aylmer became infected with the bustle and stir of preparation, he sighed and sat with his gaze bent on the quickening house long after the footman had withdrawn the rugs and pushed forward the wheeled chair.

"I'm not going in yet," he said in a deep, measured voice of habitual authority. "Bring the garden chair and tell Benson that I want him to take me round the place before lunch."

The footman touched his cap and withdrew, to return a moment later with a muscular, professionally cheerful male attendant pulling a bathchair. Towering over his shoulder, Sir Aylmer laboriously climbed down from the car and lowered himself heavily into the chair, which creaked and sank under his weight. Unobserved by him, the two servants exchanged humorously rueful glances: their master's periodical visits to the gardens were conducted in the spirit of a captain's Sunday inspection of his ship; an unswept leaf on the close-cropped lawns, a weed squeezing its way through the tightly-packed red gravel were signals for a kindling eye, for deepened furrows from nose to mouth, for a rolling thunder of rebuke. His mood was not likely to be made less critical by his son's fast approaching return.

"Is it to-day you're expecting Mr. Deryk home, sir?" Benson began conversationally, as they drew away from the house and headed for the stables.

Sir Aylmer hesitated appreciably before replying. His long pauses and slow delivery always suggested that he was trying to make up his mind whether a question was worth answering and whether his reply, with one word so long separated from another, gave away anything that anyone could use. He did not suspect his associates unduly, but, as his habit or pose was never to say a thing twice and always to stand unshakably by what he had said, it was necessary to choose his terms with care.

"He wired from Paris. I expect him in time for dinner," he answered.

"It don't seem like two years," Benson pursued. Sir Aylmer felt that he was wincing mentally. "And not much of a day to come home to."

This time there really seemed no need to answer, but the day, in its intervals of specious sunshine, was certainly uninviting. The winter of 1913 was breaking up prematurely, and the leafless trees dripped on to the steaming earth as though their very fibre were melting. From the west, where the forest line marked the Hampshire border, came a sound of sliding snow splashing in avalanche through the upper branches of the trees on to the open aisles and clearings; snow still lay on the scarred face of the Sussex downs to the south, while already, on the north, the Surrey hills were slate-grey, misty and warm. Forgotten pockets of discoloured snow lingered on the grass borders or between the banks of rhododendron on either side of the drive; melting ice and snow filled the dykes in the park, and the ha-ha was beginning to overflow into the garden. In the fifteen years that had passed since he returned from America and bought the house from Lord Stornaway, he had never seen so much water about; when he had strength, he must go into the question of draining the place more rapidly. In the meantime, someone had been taking a short cut from the engine house to the west lodge, and a corner of lawn at the side of the house was trodden down and shabby. He had spoken about that before, and someone would have to go; orders were meant to be obeyed, and without discipline and obedience it was impossible to get anything done.

The inspection of garden, outbuildings and house was carried out with vigilance and a ruthless particularity. Sir Aylmer felt that there was no room in life for the slack and casual; time, procedure and punctilio had to be observed, and it was comforting to think that this lesson was gradually being learnt, so that the life of Ripley Court moved like a perfect piece of mechanism: Phillimore, the elderly confidential secretary, Benson, the male nurse, Arkwright, the butler, Mrs. Benson, the housekeeper, Jepson, the agent, were beginning to appreciate that you got most done and wasted least time by slowly making up your mind and then treating your decision as something that could not be re-opened, could hardly be discussed. He was generally accounted a slow thinker—which perhaps meant that he was more patient than his critics,—but he was very tenacious when he had finished thinking; his critics, again, called him obstinate—which perhaps meant that they were eternally shifting and changing, while he had finished his shifts and changes before finally making up his mind. He knew himself better than did these same critics, who, by the way, remained critics while he created one of the largest fortunes in America; he had nothing of their quickness and imagination, but a compensating providence had given him a stubborn, clear-sighted sense of proportion and probability, which saved him from panic and impetuosity, as he had proved a dozen times, when they lost a million and he made one.

"You'll leave the house till after you've had your lunch, sir?" Benson suggested, as they completed the circle of the gardens and came back to the side door. Sir Aylmer's face looked grey with the unaccustomed exertion, the minute departure from routine, and it was Benson's first business to watch for the change of colour and make tactful proposals when it appeared.

"I told Mrs. Benson I would go round *before* luncheon," was the deliberate answer. It was not infrequently Benson's second business to be snubbed for his pains.

"You remember what Dr. Forsyte——" he continued persuasively.

"That will do, Benson."

Changing into his wheeled house-chair, Sir Aylmer had himself pushed into the long library which filled the whole south-west projection of the house and constituted Deryk's kingdom. Until the end of the eighteenth century the Stornaways had maintained it from a sense of pride, but in the last hundred years poverty of scholarship and lack of money had been stronger than pride; the books were uncatalogued, ill-arranged and unreplenished, their bindings tattered, their pages worm-eaten and the mouldings of their cases battered and defaced. Deryk had repaired the havoc and produced a catalogue; each new enthusiasm was marked by a new collection, and in the map-cases by the fire and the coin cabinets under the long, narrow windows could be traced the growth of his later literary passions. A third of the floor-space was covered with white wooden boxes waiting for him to unpack. The books had been ordered more than two years ago, before he went abroad; their number and cost were characteristic of his impetuosity and curious ignorance of money. Deryk certainly was impetuous, but his brain moved quickly, and he was a wonderfully rapid learner; he could speak a considerable number of languages, he was a scholar of proved taste and achievement, he was a musician. Already he had done so much that there seemed nothing of the few things remaining that he would not be able to do—and do quickly; perhaps, if he needed more time to learn a subject, he would not abandon it so quickly. And he certainly did abandon a new enthusiasm as impetuously as he took it up—early Church music (involving a new organ in the chapel), French caricaturists of the nineteenth century, even the silver age of Greek civilisation, on which he was engaged and to which he proposed to consecrate his life, when he was sent round the world. Of course he was young enough to be naturally unstable; he would want careful watching for some years yet; he must be set to work and kept at work, otherwise he would get up to all kinds of mischief; he must decide upon his career . . .

A wave of watery sunlight broke through the February sky and shone through the long, deep-set windows of the library. Over the rhododendrons and beyond the last sweep of the drive, Sir Aylmer could see a pennant of bunting hung across the village street of Aston Ripley; the school-children were busy setting it in place when he drove by in his car, and he had noticed that the bunting bore the single word "WELCOME." His cadaverous, pain-twisted face softened to a smile of pleasure; the welcome was rather a compliment to him than to Deryk, who had lived little at home, but he accepted it on the boy's behalf and bowed his acknowledgments. No one would ever know how much in the last two years he had longed for this day; his servants, elderly and uncommunicative as himself, all equally hushed in tone and spellbound by the silence and desolation of the house, would never know the sense of vast lifelessness which it had borne since Deryk went away.

But he was forgetting his promise to Mrs. Benson. Glancing cursorily at the music-room and drawing-room he had himself wheeled into the ballroom and idly pushed his way under a row of Stornaway portraits from a reputed van Dyck to an undeniable Lely, struck for the first time by the immense and wasteful size of the house. He had kept it for Deryk, and Deryk would be able to fill it, but until it changed hands it would remain an unwieldy barrack . . . The dining-room he did not need to see, but he spent a few minutes in the morning-room, looking curiously at a collection of black-figure pottery; he had almost forgotten its existence, yet at one time it was said to be the finest private collection in England; scholars from two continents had come to photograph it, dealers would approach his secretary with extravagant offers, and on Tuesdays and Fridays in the summer months cultured tourists would send in their cards and be led round by Mrs. Benson. The elect she would also take to see the china and the tapestry, but the other collections were hidden away in rooms not open to the public. Sir Aylmer decided that some day, when he had the strength, he must look into this question. . . .

Leaving the morning-room he wheeled himself into the lift and explored the upper stories. Since Forsyte, the Aston Ripley doctor, had told him to avoid stairs and make himself a bedroom on the ground floor, he had hardly moved from his narrow circuit; the lift was for emergencies, put in after Deryk had been ill; and he went upstairs now, less to oblige Mrs. Benson than to see that Deryk's room in the west wing over the library was in fit state to receive him. Pushing his way from door to door, he paused on the threshold of the central room over the hall; it had once been his own, before him it had sheltered the reigning head of the Stornaway family, and, when Deryk married, it would be for him and his wife. Sir Aylmer rose from his chair and walked unsteadily to the window, looking down the drive, though he knew that he could expect nothing for another six hours. Of late he had been wondering what manner of girl Deryk would marry. Before leaving England he had seemed too much absorbed in his books and music to spare time for any kind of social life; Ripley Court was always full of neighbours and friends for the few weeks of his vacations that he spent at home, but, though they came at his invitation, he was apt to grow tired of them after twenty-four hours and leave them to amuse themselves; these were the days when Deryk allowed his hair to grow untidily long and lay curled in an armchair before the library fire wearing disreputable clothes and never troubling to change out of slippers; it was a period of slovenliness and unsociability. Now, however, he was five and twenty; he must have met many women and would meet more; the relationship of father and son would enter upon its most delicate phase. Deryk must be protected, of course, from people who saw him only as the son of an Anglo-American millionaire, but beyond that he must work out his own salvation. . . . There was nothing like letting people work out their own salvations.

Returning to the lift, Sir Aylmer made his way downstairs, left his chair in the hall and walked into the dining-room. Silent and alone he ate an unappetising luncheon, specially prepared, and retired to his bedroom for the prescribed half hour's rest; a book lay open on his knees, but his mind was too restless for him to concentrate his thoughts. His eyes wandered from the page to a charcoal drawing of Deryk by Blessington, completed a week before sailing, and from the drawing to an oil-portrait of his wife. The boy had his mother's brown eyes and dark hair, but the thin-lipped, wilful mouth, the bony, fleshless jaws and temples, the straight, rather aquiline nose and exhalation of dominant, nervous vitality came from the other side at a time when his own nervous endurance was almost proverbial in New York. (She, poor soul, had unaccountably lost vitality when she married.) Sir Aylmer looked back, like a man recalling a forgotten story, on the twelve years in which he had risen from nothing to be one of the richest men in America. In moments of detachment even at the time of his greatest triumph he used occasionally to feel that he was really watching someone else who chanced to bear his name; now that it was all over, there seemed nothing to link up the "A. L.," whose movements and operations were followed with an interest only accorded to kings in Europe, with an English baronet, broken in health and looking if possible even nearer to death than he really was, thin, bent, lined and haggard, revealing only by flashes and empty smoke the volcanic energy and will-power of other days. Of the surge and thunder of New York not an echo or reverberation reached him; for an hour or two each day he could dictate letters and answer appeals to his charity; perhaps once a year his friend Raymond Stornaway, the philanthropic organiser, would explain and interest him in an endowment involving a hundred thousand instead of the normal, wearisome hundred. But he was unequal to detailed supervision; he had looked on impotently, while the Rhodes Bequest was formed, conscious that he could never undertake a similar effort. Ripley Court, regarded as the strong-room in which the Lancing Trust Corporation was encased, was the only reminder and tie.

When the clock liberated him from his irksome, obligatory rest, he threw aside his book, walked into the study next to his bedroom and unlocked a drawer of his writing-table. A revolving wooden rosette concealed a keyhole in the carved front of the oak book-case facing the window, and the false front opened to reveal a small steel safe with a combination lock, within which lay bundles large and small, tied with tape and neatly docketed, envelopes sealed and open, half sheets of note paper and leaves torn from a pocket book. The top strata, newest in date, shewed the scattered flashes of a brain which no longer burned with steady light. There were notes on "Housing Reform and Politics," "The Mechanism of a Subsidised Press" and "Public Health," unequal in design and all of them unfinished, starting as elaborate essays and ending in phrases, quotations and chapter headings. Below them lay a fuller study of "Free Libraries and the Control of Opinion," "The International Power of a Creditor Nation" and "Powder and Shot." Sir Aylmer turned hurriedly over this last; it was while he tested the power of a man or group of men to set their money in opposition to the destructive will of a bellicose nation that his health broke down; he was curbing democracy by withholding supplies, as formerly the bankers had curbed their kings, and he had never been given time to apply his test. Now he was unequal to trying again. The yellow manuscript pages of "Powder and Shot" always recalled an unsought holiday in the South Pacific, followed by a premature return to New York, followed in turn by aching weeks in a darkened house on Riverside Drive, wherein he tried with lips puckered at one side to explain that all would be well with him if the doctor would only put back the top of his skull instead of leaving the brain pulsing in agonised exposure. . . . He rapidly turned over the ragged-edged essays, seeking to drive that one memory away. "The Development of the Mississippi Valley" was ancient history by now and had never been anything but a commercial enterprise; in the latter days of his power he had come to regard commerce and finance as a means of political ascendancy, it was in this light that he would have Deryk regard them. . . .

The leaden sky blackened until the curving lines of the drive were blotted out. A footman came in to draw the curtains, but Sir Aylmer, blinking and starting out of his reverie as the lights were turned on, shook his head.

"I want to see the car, as it drives up," he said, restoring his papers to the safe and locking the door.

Then he pulled an armchair at right angles to the fire, so that he could command the windows, and sat with heavy eyes half closed, at one moment dozing, at another rousing himself to look at the clock, his face in repose like the death-mask of a gaunt old prize-fighter. The fire had sunk low and the room was filled with long, flickering shadows, when the faint note of a horn was followed by the sound of changing gears. Sir Aylmer clutched the arms of his chair and dragged himself painfully upright; Benson ought to have been at hand, he could not be late in welcoming his own son home; there was neither sight nor sound of the fellow, and, setting his teeth and first steadying himself against the table, Sir Aylmer strode erect and firm into the silent hall. Two shafts of light crept creamily along the rusty gravel, as he threw the doors open, and a moment later the car was opposite the steps.

"Dad!"

A lithe figure bounded out of the car, straightened itself and ran up the steps three at a time.

"I'm very glad to see you home, Deryk," said Sir Aylmer in his deep, unmodulated voice.

"I'm jolly glad to be home, dad. How are you? How's Ripley? How's everything?" demanded Deryk, shaking his father's hand, then shedding his coat and scarf on to the floor, throwing his hat into a chair and shaking hands a second time.

Sir Aylmer gazed long at the lean, travel-stained face with the dancing, brown eyes and disordered hair. There was the same impetuous energy, the same eager impatience as ever; Deryk seemed unaged and unchanged by his two years' absence.

"Everything's much the same," he answered slowly after his usual damping hesitation; then he turned again with outstretched hand to a rosy, benevolent little man, who had dawdled on the steps until the first greetings were over. "How are you, Ted?"

"Tired and hungry," was the reply, delivered in a high, rather nasal voice. "So'd you be, if you'd tried to keep pace with Deryk for two years. I told you at the outset it was no part of a family solicitor's business to turn bear-leader at my time of life. I'm very glad to see you again, Aylmer."

The three men stood smiling a little self-consciously in a silence which each was reluctant to break, Sir Aylmer and Deryk from dislike of visible emotion, Hatherly through a sense that he was superfluous. The tension was relaxed by Arkwright, the elderly butler, who stepped deferentially forward to Sir Aylmer and murmured something in an undertone.

"Oh, dinner at once," was the answer. "As soon as they've had time to wash. Deryk, you—enjoyed yourself, I hope? You remember you weren't very anxious to go."

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world!" Deryk cried. "Lord, yes! I wanted to be a mouldy recluse and was frightfully sick when you wouldn't let me."

"It's not too late yet," said Sir Aylmer with one of his rare smiles, flirting timidly with a lapse into banter.

2

"What are you going to do with him now?" Hatherly asked, as Deryk ran away from the dining-room to announce to the staff his return home, and he was left alone with Sir Aylmer and the wine. "You'll find him a handful, if you don't set him to work."

For an hour and a half he and Deryk had taken turns in describing their two years' wanderings through India, Burmah and the Straits to China, Japan and Manchuria. Unlimited by time and money, they had turned south to explore the Dutch East Indies and had made their way by Australia and New Zealand through the Pacific Islands to

San Francisco, where they struck north to fetch a compass of Canada before descending through the States of Mexico and South America. The tour was to give Deryk a breadth and maturity which Eton and Magdalen had failed to impart; he was to see the world in its variety and size and so in some measure to counteract the conventional education which his father deplored. Successive letters, pursuing the travellers further and further east, demanded in terms whether Deryk was becoming a little more manly, less impetuous, of weightier judgment. Hatherly, no humourist himself, found difficulty in answering these solemn demands for daily reports without becoming unforgivably flippant. The letters and enquiries followed them from Buenos Aires to Teneriffe, where they changed to a Union Castle liner and worked round the Cape, through Rhodesia and the Lakes to East Africa, the Sudan and Egypt; thence, with a sudden pang of homesickness, they made for Brindisi and home.

"There's plenty for him to do," murmured Sir Aylmer. "Did he give you much trouble?"

"Oh, nothing out of the ordinary. He's just what you were at his age, though *too* restless, *too* energetic; the world's not quite big enough for him to conquer."

Hatherly poured himself out a second glass of port wine and sipped it appreciatively, looking, with his bald head, large spectacles and twinkling eyes, like a reincarnation of Mr. Pickwick. "At his age—no, you must have been older then. D'you remember that peculiarly bleak March morning when you strode into my office, remarking that you'd had as much as you could stand? I never imagined then. . . ."

He broke off and gazed round the long room with its rows of departed Stornaways, finally letting his eyes rest upon his friend's face.

Sir Aylmer hesitated long, and his eyes, too, wandered round the great room in which the table was like an island of light in a dark sea.

"I never imagined, either. . . ." he muttered. Both men had sunk their voices, as though they were discussing a guilty secret. Ripley Court invited a subdued, deferential tone.

"You wanted me to come with you," said Hatherly, half to himself.

Sir Aylmer nodded.

"If we had our time over again, Ted. . . ."

Hatherly wrinkled his nose and thrust out his lower lip dubiously.

"With power to look into the future?" he asked. "I should have come. Any man born of woman would have come. I don't say that I shouldn't have regretted it later, of course."

Sir Aylmer lay back like a venerable, dying king on a carved throne.

"I sometimes—wonder—whether I should have gone—at all," he said very slowly.

On that bleak March morning thirty years before, Aylmer Lancing, barrister-at-law, had called in Lincoln's Inn Fields to take farewell of his only friend. Then and always, unlike Deryk, he lacked the art of making friends easily; Hatherly he had met six or eight years earlier at a Fleet Street chop-house, and an acquaintance begun over a game of dominoes had ripened into a friendship based on loneliness and common poverty. Hatherly was an articled clerk; Lancing, by the desire of his father, who was an unprosperous general practitioner in Cheshire, had lately got himself called to the Bar and was entering upon the lean, early years of a profession that from the first was profoundly uncongenial to him. His mental qualities of tenacity and slow commonsense were always obscured by inelasticity. For half a dozen years he added to his father's modest allowance by an occasional summons or dock defence, but in all that time his fees on circuit did not pay his expenses, and of a London practice he had nothing at all. The modest allowance paid his share of a clerk and chamber-rent and a subscription to the Law Reports; he contrived further to feed and clothe himself and to contribute his quota of the expenses of a joint establishment with Hatherly and a journalist in Gray's Inn. When Dr. Lancing died of bronchitis in the winter of 1882, the luxury of running the legal profession at a loss had to be cut short. Selling his books and leaving one third of the furniture in satisfaction of all claims for rent, Aylmer Lancing sailed from England with three letters of introduction and a single trunk.

"I've had about as much of this as I can stand," he had told Hatherly between set teeth, scowling out of the rain-blurred windows on to the hated roof of Lincoln's Inn. "I must go to some place where I'm mixing with intellectual inferiors; then I shall come into my own."

"But why go to America?" Hatherly had urged.

"Oh, I'm a failure here. I want to make a fresh start without any record to live down. I shall wander about America till I find *some* job that I can do better than men who've been spared a public school education and a legal training. So far I've always worked above my level."

And on that word he had shaken hands with his friend, driven to the station and turned his back on London and the eight years of his life that it had wasted. On arriving in New York, he presented his letters of introduction and was received with lavish hospitality. His entertainers, however, drew a rigid line between their private and their commercial life. Of Lancing's abilities and integrity they knew nothing, and any position that they could offer to a stranger was felt by them to be not worth offering. Half jocularly he told them that there was no job he would not undertake, but they preferred to disbelieve him, and, when he had made the circuit of their houses, he remained with no more prospects and fewer resources than the latest arrived Irish immigrant.

"It is as easy to starve on Broadway as in Fleet Street," he wrote to Hatherly a few months later with an unforgiving ferocity that oozed through the lines of his letter, "but perhaps not so pleasant." His next letter sounded a note of sombre triumph. "I have found a greater fool than myself. After working an elevator in a block on Fourth Avenue, I've been taken in as book-keeper to a firm of real estate agents. Their regular man went sick, but, as book-keeping is no part of a legal training, I reckon on being fired as soon as he comes back."

A month later, however, he was still in the same employment, though no longer as book-keeper. His deliberate, unhurried sanity of outlook impressed his principals, and he was invited to stay on with an increased salary and enhanced responsibilities. His firm was agent to the Western Development Syndicate, and the chief of Lancing's duties was to survey and report on suitable properties for the Syndicate to acquire in its great developing march into the Middle West. Nothing in his early training had prepared him for the work, but his unrefined, brutal faculty of grasping primitive essentials enabled him now to choose almost unfalteringly the sites on which townships would later have inevitably to be built and the natural trade routes which the railroads would inevitably have to follow. He would not be hurried; he would not confuse himself with non-essentials and irrelevancies. Westward from Indianapolis and Springfield to Kansas City, Lancing prospected and bought. The new Illinois-Iowa-Colorado road was in contemplation, and there was hardly a limit to the options which his principals were prepared to secure for the Syndicate. Lancing enjoyed the responsibility and the sense of handling large sums of money. He was well-paid, he told Hatherly, though it would be long before he could feel secure; as a bachelor of simple tastes, however, he was able to save a substantial portion of his salary. "Money isn't my first consideration," he wrote. "It comes second or third or fourth. First of all there's self-esteem; there's no sensation in the world like 'making good.' Then there's responsibility and the gratification of feeling that people trust you. In England I've defended a murderer before now, but he never trusted me; he'd never have looked at me if he could have got anyone else. Here people put millions of dollars into my hands, knowing that, if I let them down, their business will begin to look a bit sick. . . . But best of all there's the excitement of doing business. As money grubbers I suppose the Yanks don't compare with the French, the Germans, the Chinese, the Jews. They just love business for the interest of the thing, and, on my soul, if you've got a continent this size to play with, not a hundredth part developed, you can understand their keenness. I'm a richer man than when I came out, but I don't see myself a millionaire and I don't want to be one. . . ."

This letter was written one month, and reached Hatherly one week, before an event which made Aylmer Lancing a millionaire more quickly and unexpectedly than had ever happened even in a continent of easy millions. His principals had sent him to Charleston, Illinois, to report on the advisability of the Illinois-Iowa-Colorado railroad running a loop line to pick up the stores of grain which were assembled in Charleston from the wheat fields of the west and despatched by water to the railhead at Banbury. His day's work done, Lancing was walking up and down the mile-long main street of the town, smoking a last cigar before going to bed, when he observed a red glare in the sky at the eastern end; as he walked, the glare spread, and a sound of shouting beat upon his ears. Within five minutes the flames, leaping from block to block, were roaring over a quarter of the street; the crazy, green and white wooden houses belched forth a stream of panic-stricken men and women, and still the gently fanning breeze urged the tongues of fire over the side streets to lick the blistering wood-work on the other side.

For several minutes Lancing stood motionless, drunk with the wild beauty and awed by the rushing roar of the flames. Then he decided that the fire must be stopped. Three more blocks had been swallowed with a hungry roar before he thought out the means, but thereafter he acted quickly and unswervingly. Doubling back, he shouted for volunteers to help demolish a block in the path of the racing fire. Scared men hurried up at sound of a voice that would command them, and, after twenty minutes' frenzied work with axes and crowbars, a yawning gulf, too wide for the flames to bridge, had been carved in the side of the street. At the head of his volunteers Lancing ran back and drove a dazed crowd at the point of a crowbar westward out of the town and into safety. All night long the fire roared in the great grain repositories, but its path to the west was barred, and a saving line of wharf-frontage and canal checked its progress to the south.

At day-break the heat had abated its fury enough to allow the townsfolk to venture back. Of the business half of the town there remained a flaky stretch of grey ashes; the Indian quarter was largely untouched, and perhaps a third of the modern extension to the west had escaped. As a commercial centre Lancing saw that Charleston had ceased to exist.

"But it won't take long to rebuild," he said deliberately, looking from the flimsy wooden shanties to a grey-faced man who was staring stonily at the charred and smouldering barge which represented the salvage of his fortunes.

"What kind of fool's going to rebuild it?" was the answer. "Guess I'm going to make tracks for Minneapolis or Grantstown before the crowd gets started. Rebuild! This township's burnt out of the map."

Lancing looked at the man in surprise. He was wrong; the fire and his own losses had unsteadied his nerve; geographically and for a dozen other reasons the city would have to be rebuilt. No one shared his opinion, however, and, when he engaged in similar discussions with other men that day, the upshot was always the same; Charleston was off the map, out of the Union, derelict and damned; her citizens were migrating in a body, and he could pay his hotel bill and quit or buy the hotel at a knock-out price and run it himself. The hotel-keeper spoke with the hyperbole of bitterness, for, whereas the grain and its repositories were insured, no policy would cover the destruction of the city as a place of business. Within a month it would rank with the tumble-down, deserted towns of the Far West, a forgotten footprint in the march of progress. Lancing could buy the whole city for the price of a Wall Street office, he was assured.

Slow-minded, obstinate and detached, he refused to share the easy assumption that the history of Charleston was closed. The canal system, linked with the Mississippi, was undestroyed and indestructible; a new town could be run up in wood by the month's end, in stone at the end of six. Even if the Illinois-Iowa-Colorado road passed by on the north, even if it proved beyond human contrivance to build a loop line, the town was worth buying for its waterways and roads, which he had seen stretching out into the rolling wheat land of the west. And there was always the chance that it might be joined up by rail.

At the end of thirty hours' brooding on one subject, Lancing made up his mind and secured an option on the hotel on behalf of the Western Development Syndicate, which carried more weight than the names of his principals. He had no authority to pledge name or credit, but he was always given a free hand; he had so often exceeded his authority and been joyously indemnified. For a week he bought steadily: first the solid properties that were untouched, then the smouldering ruins, then the undeveloped outskirts of the town. When it was known in the first feverish exodus that an eccentric was prepared to purchase charred foundations, deserted streets and trackless waste land, the vanishing proprietors of Charleston jostled each other to unload their lots before the eccentric regained sanity. Unhurriedly—he was too tired to hurry—Lancing pored over his plans, while excited sellers undercut one another; by the week's end he had acquired the whole town with the exception of an insignificant negro quarter where the titles were dubious. Then, giddy with want of sleep, he packed his papers and returned to New York.

His principals were surprised to see him back at such a time. They were incredulous and dismayed when he described the purchases to which, on his single responsibility, he had committed their chief client. The size of the transaction alone frightened them; they were not prepared to argue or be persuaded. Millions of dollars had been pledged by an unauthorised agent to an undertaking which the firm had had no opportunity of judging; as real estate agents they could have nothing to do with it themselves; as agents to the Western Development Syndicate they declined to risk their connection by recommending so frantic a speculation. Lancing had gone in single-handed; single-handed he must extricate himself.

He spent a day digesting the decision and then made his way to the offices of the Syndicate itself and laid bare his proposals. If his contracts were repudiated, the liability would fall on his shoulders alone, and he had not as many cents as the dollars he had pledged. It was bad enough to be faced with the legal consequences of his venture, but financial ruin was easier to bear than the sense of opportunity wantonly thrown away. To the man who had seen Charleston before the fire and after, it was inconceivable that it should not rise again to be one of the leading grain markets of the Middle West. He explained, described and pleaded, but the rock-like faces before him only relaxed to become derisive. Against the judgment of the whole city he had decided that a certain industry was to be concentrated in a certain place; while he bought the sites, the industry was taking wings northward, unable and unwilling to wait while the town was rebuilt. What stress or inducement could he offer to force or woo the scattered townsfolk back to their homes?

Lancing left the Syndicate and demanded an interview with the President of the Illinois-Iowa-Colorado Railroad, to whom he offered the options on condition that the loop line was immediately constructed. After two days and one night of negotiations an agreement was reached. The railroad corporation took up the options and paid Lancing generously in ordinary stock; a new syndicate was formed to rebuild Charleston, and at a convenient season the press announced that arrangements had been made to link up the city with the main east-and-west system, which would not, as had been unofficially suggested, run through Grantstown. Within forty-eight hours of the announcement, the Grantstown immigrants, betrayed and helpless, were pouring south again, and the men who had sold a month earlier at break-up prices now bought on a soaring market every yard of land which the railroad corporation would offer.

A year later, when his city was rebuilt, Lancing was a rich man, by any standard; but his riches were only beginning to accumulate. The rebuilding forced him into new fields of enterprise, and he found himself automatically buying lumber and steel for the rising city. As the railroad laid its tracks further and further west, Lancing became ever richer; when the New Mexico and Montana line was in contemplation, his was the largest single subscription of capital, and the same automatic development compelled him to buy a fleet of lake steamers to operate in conjunction with the new railroad. From transportation it was a short step to acquire an interest in the things transported, and Lancing's freight cars began to carry Lancing's grain over Lancing's system.

"They say of you," he was told by a Boston girl whom he met in the summer of '86 at Atlantic City and was to marry the following year, "that folk can't get in or out of America or travel around or take an apartment or buy a little bit of lighting or heat without A. L.'s leave."

"Well, I guess that's pretty well so," Lancing answered. "And without paying something into A. L.'s pocket. I wouldn't just like to say how it's all come about, but it has. One thing leads to another, you see."

"But what d'you make out to do with it all?" the girl pursued.

Lancing considered her deliberately.

"If I could get away, I'd like to take a run around London for a piece to shew them that I'd measured up," he answered.

"And then?"

"Then I guess I sort of got to get back here."

"To make more money?"

"Sure."

The girl returned to her first question.

"But what are you going to do with it?"

"I never rightly thought that up," Lancing replied. "It—it isn't the money. I'm not sure that I know what it is."

3

"You ought to have stayed over here after you were married," said Hatherly, breaking the long silence. He had drunk his wine and was now cutting a cigar in the companionship of his own thoughts; Sir Aylmer, who neither drank wine nor smoked, had been sitting sunk in his chair, twirling the stem of a wine-glass between thumb and first finger and gazing fixedly through half-closed eyes into the gloom, beyond the yellow circle of candle-light. Neither noticed any break of connection or pause in their conversation.

"I meant to," answered Sir Aylmer. "Heaven knows what I should have done; I've been trying to find out the last fifteen years, but I meant to. I as good as promised Gwen I would, before we married. Then you remember I met Raymond on the boat, and he set me thinking."

In 1887 Lancing had married the Boston girl. They spent a leisurely honeymoon in Europe, staying with Hatherly as they passed through London, and returned to America in time for Mrs. Lancing's confinement. On the voyage west their places in the saloon were opposite an untidy, cheerfully rebellious young man named Raymond Stornaway, who was being despatched against his will to Washington as a Third Secretary in the British Embassy. At Trinity, Cambridge, he had been at least the most disputatious of an advanced school of Philosophic Radicals and was ready then, as throughout life, to express theories on all subjects, ever posing as the simple, sane man in a world of criminals and lunatics, but avoiding offence by his obviously sincere belief in his ephemeral ideas. Books undigested and phrases misunderstood simmered and boiled in his eager brain, and throughout his conversation ran a strain of good-humoured cynicism instilled by a quarter of a century of life as the younger son of an impoverished peer with an obsolete conception of what became his family. With the omniscience of five and twenty he poured out ideas to Lancing as the two strolled up and down the decks on the first night of an acquaintance arising out of Stornaway's attack on all rich men of all countries and ages. He was only waiting to become rich himself to instruct the world.

"I wanted to go into business when I left school," he confided, "but the family thought it was *infra dig.* Dam' nonsense! We're as poor as church mice. I want power, sir; I feel I could do such a lot if I had the money. Very few people know how to spend money on a large scale, but I'm sure I'm one."

"What would you do?" asked his companion. "By the way, my name's Lancing."

"Mine's Stornaway. Are you *the* Lancing? Then it's quite clear I've put my foot into it."

"Tell me what you'd do, before we discuss that," Lancing suggested. "You may find that I'm one of the very large class that doesn't know how to spend money on a big scale. I've—I've never tried; I'm not sure that I should know how to start. I simply put more and more money into more and more things; ultimately my income looks like increasing beyond control. I—don't quite know how it's come about."

Young Stornaway led the way to two chairs by the boat-deck companionway and indulged in an hour-long monologue on the social and political possibilities of wealth—the eradication of disease, the control of opinion, the capture of education—subjects which were afterwards to develop into the yellow-paged essays in the safe. He was equally prepared to start a revolution or stop a war; in his hands money was equally potent for either.

"People tie themselves in such knots," Stornaway complained. "They won't stick to the essentials. If you want to make the world contented, if you want to make it do your work, you must keep it healthy, warm and well-fed. To make it discontented, arrange for some to be better fed than others. Surely that's simple enough? God knows, I don't *want* to reform mankind, but with your money I could. I'd play on their jealousy, which is one of the strongest human instincts I know; I'd plan a city. . . ."

With wild gesticulations and mischievous gurgles of laughter, as his theme developed, Raymond Stornaway elaborated his scheme for a model industrial town with every house a palace of luxury and every tenant secure in possession as long as he observed his landlord's terms—"Turn a man out, if he gets drunk twice; his wife will look at her central heating, her labour-saving appliances, her pound of comfort for a shilling of rent, and she'll take darned good care that the first time her ruffian of a husband gets drunk is also the last. The tenants will cling to their houses like death, and, if you set up your model city at Pittsburg, all Bethlehem will go on strike until the people there have model houses, and the strikes will spread until everyone's living below cost. Spoil the market, spoil the market for your rivals; make *them* build model cities in competition, and in five years you'll have revolutionised working-class housing conditions. Once your people are comfortable, clean and healthy, you can do something with them; and all the while they're tenants on your terms; you can reject a man who doesn't believe in the Trinity, you can play such tricks with their moral, religious, political faith as would stagger human imagination. You see that, sir?"

Aylmer Lancing had lagged a pace behind his young friend's argument.

"I should have to think that out a bit," he said.

Stornaway hurried excitedly down a newly revealed avenue.

"Think of the political effect of it, sir!" he exclaimed. "Of course you've got to be rich, because you're feeding and housing an entire people out of your own pocket, but, once you've started, you can always make the other rich men take their share, because no one's rich enough to be outdone by you. Well, start a scheme of housing reform in Lancashire, make yourself king of your own people, buy up the papers and shove them down people's throats below cost. My dear sir, there will be strikes and riots until everyone is living in the same luxury as your people. The infection will spread to Yorkshire, carried by your subsidised press; there'll be parliamentary candidates; in half a dozen years not only will you have revolutionised housing conditions, but you'll have given yourself feudal power over the souls and bodies of your tenants. Of course, the press has been shamefully neglected. . . ."

In a rapid digression young Stornaway sketched a newspaper trust which was to undersell the old papers, ruin them and buy the ruins at break-up prices until no single paper remained outside the ring. Tories and Radicals should have each their old, proper organ, but the direction would come from a single controlling hand. And some day, when opposition had been killed, the thousand mouths of the trust would speak with one voice. And the controlling hand would grasp such power as had never been wielded before.

"It will take time to buy or break up old family properties like the 'Times' or the 'Morning Post,' but you can start doing it to-morrow. Hitherto the press has been established by relatively poor men, who can't take fancy risks; now your first job is to see that every man in the country gets a better paper at a cheaper price, whatever it may cost you. Give it away, if you like, but see that it gets everywhere; you can afford it, you can fling away money for a year or two, if at the end you're going to get your rivals coming to you on their knees. And your power as head of a newspaper trust. . . . It's like my scheme for getting control of public education. . . ."

The deck was growing gradually deserted, but Lancing seemed disposed to sit listening for a while longer. Stornaway pursued an unwearied course of explanatory declamation. He was convinced that all thought and expression could be controlled by the man who took the trouble to control education. Existing schools and universities must be left where they were for the present, but in rivalry any rich man could establish a chain of private school, public school and college with such endowments that the stream of candidates would be drawn off the older schools and diverted to the new. Once the pupils were secured, they could be taught anything.

"You will have control of these boys and girls—don't forget to corrupt the girls' minds too; they're the future mothers—from six to twenty-six, starting with a kindergarten and ending with a travelling fellowship, fat scholarships the whole way. You can decide that the only doctrines taught are to be the literal inspiration of the Old Testament and Mill's Utilitarianism. The parents will fall over one another to get their children in, if the scholarships are large enough and you provide plenty to eat. There's no insanity of education that you can't get people to swallow, if only it's sufficiently endowed. . . . Look what they teach at an English public school! Good God, when I was at Cambridge, they solemnly insisted on my reading Paley's 'Evidences of Christianity.' Now, think of my colossal power, if I can set up private schools, public schools, universities, where only my doctrines would be taught and where the boys would simply have to come because of the immense money prizes. . . . I'd create a public opinion among future public men—a school of statesmen. After I'd been at it for thirty years, all your civil service here and abroad, all your journalists, your soldiers, your dons and school masters, your parliamentary candidates, your parsons and labour leaders would all have been through my mill. Not thirty years, no; but in relatively short time. They might disagree as much as they pleased with what they'd been taught, but they'd never be able quite to shake it off; it would be like Christianity or the 'Wealth of Nations'; their minds would be coloured by my doctrines; I should be the intellectual currency of that generation, and, after I'd gone, there'd be a crop of books about me, a tradition, a school of thought. . . ."

Lancing cut into the frothing peroration with the first objection that he had found time to frame before being dragged off his feet and hurried through mazes of digression to new avenues of thought.

"But if you haven't got any particular doctrines?" he demanded in slow perplexity.

"Oh, everyone has."

"Well, I haven't."

Young Stornaway looked at him incredulously for a moment, then ran both hands through his disordered mop of reddish-brown hair.

"You couldn't have knocked about the world, you couldn't have made all your money without philosophising and getting all sorts of views and doctrines together."

"You must remember I was taken by surprise," Lancing answered. "I'd never *thought* of thinking things out before; I haven't had time since. But we must be getting to bed. Let me know when you finally quarrel with your relations and give up the Diplomatic. If you're still keen on a commercial life, I may be able to give you an introduction. My address——"

"I suppose 'Lancing, America' will always find you," Stornaway interrupted with a smile.

The two men did not meet again for three years. In 1888 Deryk was born, and for many months the centre of gravity in Lancing's life was shifted. He attended his office perfunctorily and forgot his momentary questions of soul on the political possibilities of wealth. Until he roused himself to break the Smelting and Refining Combine, his rivals said that A. L. was a back-number, wholly sunk in domesticity. The old problem remained, each year's end saw him almost intolerably richer than before, more widely and deeply committed; but he no longer troubled himself about the future, and his wife no longer wondered what kind of thing they were to make of their life; whether they lived in America or Europe depended on Deryk. Sitting on the nursery floor, watching him in the slanting evening sun, as he crawled and dragged himself over the rug or stood precariously erect before toppling into a pile of cushions, they were content to whisper endlessly of the life that they would prepare for him. He was to be educated in England; Aylmer Lancing still hated English public school education, but he hated democracy more—he had found so many opportunities of despising it; they would make a new home for him as soon as his father could set his affairs in order; and for an hour they would discuss where the new home was to be and how Deryk was to be better taught and trained than any boy of the past—as was fitting. . . .

The affairs were not in order when Raymond Stornaway called at the big stone house on Riverside Drive in 1891. He was being transferred to Rio, and the moment seemed opportune for breaking with the Diplomatic Service and trying his luck elsewhere before all initiative had died within him. The Lancings entertained him at dinner and picked up the threads of discussion where they had been dropped three years before. Stornaway had grown maturer in practical judgment, but was as voluble and full of theories as ever.

"You'll never use your money till you're compelled to," he told Lancing airily, as dinner drew to a close. "But I've a theory that you'll have to before long. For one thing, your financial interests extend to pretty well every country in the world: well, there's bound to be political or industrial trouble in one of them, and you'll have to settle it, if you don't want to lose your money. What I want out of you at the moment, though, is a job. I'm young, intelligent, honest and extraordinarily ambitious; I want you to give me an opening, and I'll shew you what I'm made of."

A few enquiries and an introduction gave Stornaway his chance with a firm of contractors in South America. When they met four years later, Stornaway had travelled far and fast and was in a position to demand a partnership, which he got. Lancing's mind was preoccupied with other thoughts that season. The news of the Jameson Raid had disturbed two important markets, and he had a feeling that one lawless Britisher, backed by a handful of mine-owners and considerable Jingo approbation, should not be allowed to throw a peaceful industry into disorder and derange his own operations.

"What do you make of this South African business?" he asked moodily.

"It was bound to come," answered Stornaway without hesitation. "When a self-centred agricultural community happens to sit down on diamond-and-gold-yielding soil, I've a theory that all the damned rapscallions of the world will always come and make a disturbance. You can let 'em into your peaceful country, and they'll make a hell of it; or you can try to keep them out, as the Dutch have been doing, and you'll probably have your peaceful country grabbed from you. You stand to lose anyway, like the Mexicans and Peruvians, like the Indians of this country, if you like, unless you're strong enough to repel the intruder."

"But the British Government can't conceivably justify the Raid or support Jameson," objected Lancing.

Stornaway's chubby face lined itself into a cynical smile.

"Not now, perhaps," he conceded. "But the South African diamond men are rich and not over-scrupulous. And they're a lot more enterprising than you, Lancing. They'll propagandise Westminster. You've always got these two irreconcilables in South Africa, and, when the time's ripe, there'll be another disturbance, another raid. 'This is the second time,' our Government will say. 'It's getting beyond a joke. You Boers can't run your own show; we must protect British interests.' Then they'll send a gunboat or two and a column, the Press will work up the Majuba business for all it's worth and we shall establish a protectorate over the Dutch republics. I told you years ago, when we first discussed the subject, that a rich man could have a war or a revolution for the asking."

Lancing brooded over his young friend's facile generalisations.

"Could he stop it?" he asked at length. "Even I know that it's easier to destroy than to build up."

"If he's rich enough," was the prompt reply. "You—I mean all the people with money can threaten to refuse a loan. You can refuse other things, too—steel, lead, propellants, explosives—I gather that this South African rumpus is affecting you? Well, I told you that you'd expanded so far that sooner or later you'd be sensitive to any kind of disturbance in any part of the world. You'd better study the raw material of war and make a corner."

4

Sir Aylmer interrupted his reverie to push back his chair and accept the support of Hatherly's arm from the dining-room to his own study. He had been waiting for Deryk to come back and could not imagine where he had gone; it was not much to ask of him that he should remain in the room till the end of dinner on his first night at home; apparently he had not changed much in two years.

"How is Raymond?" Hatherly asked, as he pulled two armchairs to the fire and arranged a rest for Sir Aylmer's feet.

"As—effervescent as ever," was the reply, given a little grudgingly. Sir Aylmer never understood how he came to surrender so easily and often to Raymond's spell; yet, after their two-minute discussion of the Jameson Raid, he had set his mind to work for the first time on the wider potentialities of money. A growing intelligence department, collected automatically and of necessity to watch on his behalf what he had neither time nor knowledge to watch for himself, guided his hesitating steps beyond the limits of pure commerce. Each earlier development had followed logically from the one before; he had built a railroad to carry grain, he had bought lumber and steel to build a railroad. Hitherto he had not confused commerce with politics; that steady concentration of purpose, indeed, distinguished him from old Diethelm, who was always flitting between Frankfurt, Paris, London and New York, trying to consolidate the international bankers and open their eyes to a realisation of their own diplomatic powers. (It was quite impracticable, whatever Raymond Stornaway might say; the London issue houses suspected a ruse for pooling a profitable business, and in New York the Gregory group had, as ever, declined to work with a Jewish bank. Diethelm was a visionary—like Raymond.) Carnegie was winning the visible success of being allowed at his own expense to build peace halls and arbitration courts—another visionary. Stahl and Marlowe were believed to have an interest in several armament rings, which was to get on nodding terms with reality; but Lancing went to work as a relaxation and in a spirit of experiment. There was nothing much in it. . . . Even with the help of Carnegie and Gould, Harriman and Rockefeller, Astor and Morgan, he could not hope to buy Woolwich, Skoda and Essen, as he had bought the Great Lakes Steamship Company and the New Mexico and Montana Railway. There were political obstacles which the minted wealth of the world could not overcome. If the works were to continue, they must, of course, be supplied with raw material, and, if a gun needed iron ore and tungsten, copper and nickel, presumably that gun lay at the mercy of the man who held the available world's supply.

Slow and profoundly sceptical, Lancing learned all that his intelligence department could teach him about tungsten; he started with a virgin mind, not knowing where or how tungsten was obtained; as his interest quickened, he laid his plans for the monopoly of its supply; the project of interfering with the armament works of the world yielded place to a larger project of controlling the world's supplies of steel by establishing a monopoly of that which was necessary to harden steel. It was long since he had taken a big risk; never had he tried to concentrate in his own hands the supply of a single commodity. This would be power, if he succeeded, and he worked hard, for Deryk was now eight, and they had decided to take him over to England the following year. Throughout the spring and summer of 1896 he was in his office from seven in the morning until nine at night, patiently silent in his rectangular glass box, listening without comment by the hour and abruptly making up his slow-moving mind. Deryk and his mother bathed and played at Atlantic City, when New York became too hot for them; but Lancing refused to follow them until his new project was in train. When he came, it was to bid them accompany him for a six month's cruise in the Pacific. The work was unfinished, hardly begun, but he had been picked up unconscious from the floor of his private office, where he sat ostentatiously with the door open, to shew New York that he was accessible; his doctor told him that he was suffering from nervous strain. For a time the right side of his face was puckered, and he could not speak distinctly. Then his control returned, but the memory of the sudden surrender of brain, the puckered mouth, the stiffness down one side of his body frightened him, and he was a tractable patient.

At the end of the six months he returned to New York and reported formally to the doctor, who declined to pronounce him fit for work and ordered a further rest. Lancing, slowly deciding that all was not well with him, called in a specialist and had himself re-examined. This time there was no loose talk about nervous strain; he was told that, in the sense of the word understood in New York, he would never be able to work again.

"A. L. *is* a back-number," he said to himself, as he drove to his office; he repeated the words mechanically, as he set about furtively destroying a number of papers dealing with undertakings which he would never finish. The phrase had sprung from a forgotten pocket of his memory, and he used it dispassionately and without rancour, though he could have wished for any other tag to come and relieve duty. "I am going to take another holiday, Gwen," he announced that night in the same even tone, though he looked deliberately round the drawing-room on Riverside Drive rather than at his wife, who would now see him only in his degradation. "It will last as long as I do," he went on. "The fool doctor says I may travel and pick up cups and saucers, like J. P. Morgan. Or I can sign cheques for free libraries half an hour a day, if I promise to stop when I'm tired. Or I can——" He stopped suddenly, and his voice leapt shrill and hoarse. "Gwen, I'm done for! They're never going to let me work again!!"

The next day, deaf to protests, he left the house at seven to begin collecting and tidying the work of fifteen years before leaving America for ever. Whatever happened, he must clear things up before the next stroke; Gwen and the boy must be provided for, and there was no one to help him, no one he could trust, no one who knew anything about the business. Since the earliest days he had worked alone, because he could not tolerate the system of yielding to a majority among his colleagues, when he knew them to be wrong; alone the work would have to be finished, but it was like punting with a sprung pole; the next thrust might well be the last. Some little minor help was forthcoming on the other side, and Hatherly was instructed by cable to make ready in England; Raymond Stornaway, passing through New York on his way to purge Panama of fever and, though he knew it not, to leave his health behind there, offered his brother's house in Sussex for the new home. (Raymond always bustled up with some fantastic project! What was the use of a dilapidated house to a man in his state? It was offered as a plaything, a distraction.) The offer was made at the beginning of dinner, when Lancing was wondering whether a man was justified in ending this sort of thing, putting himself out of his misery, as the phrase went. He drank a bottle of champagne, however, though his doctor had warned him that action and reaction were equal and opposite; gradually he felt better, later he knew that he was going to get quite well again. So the onlookers, who trooped into the office to say good-bye, were shewn an "A. L." as determined and as steady-eyed as ever; indeed, rather quicker in making up his mind and impatient with the inevitably slow formation of the Lancing Trust Corporation. *He* could make it no quicker; he was working ten hours a day for seven days a week, dragged out for three months in defiance of a labouring heart and tattered nerves. And it didn't help things when fools came and told him how bad he looked; as if he did not know it! For the last week he was living on dry biscuits, champagne, coffee and cigars; the corporation had to be launched. And on the night when his work was done, he was carried home to die. Nothing could save a man, said the doctor, if he tried so hard to kill himself.

For three months Lancing lay in a darkened room, panting as his heart raced and stopped, trembling at distant sounds and wondering when the blood, which surged to his head like a river in flood, would burst through the skull like water from a broken main. The bone, he knew, was thin as paper, for the "clock-clock" of trotting horses on Riverside Drive stung and bruised his unprotected brain. For the first month his wife was with him night and day; by gripping her wrist he could remain in bed when the ship rolled. (Evidently they were taking him to England, as arranged, and had carried the house bodily on board to avoid disturbing him; it was hard to believe that any ship could keep afloat when it rolled until he felt himself falling perpendicularly out of bed.) After the first month she disappeared. He was convinced that she had gone overboard in one of the recent heavy seas, and cried like a child, with long, quivering sobs, until she was led in between two nurses. Then he cried because she, too, was ill. At the end of the second month he began to sleep naturally, all night and most of the day, being roused for a few moments to have milk poured into his mouth. The room had become steadier, and the bone was growing more over his naked, pulsating brain, though he still panted as though he had been running. Once he enquired, slowly but clearly, where his wife was; the doctor said that she was asleep. A week later she was rather unwell; as he gained strength, the reports of her grew graver; only when he was strong enough for the news, did he learn that she had died a month before.

On a late summer afternoon of 1897 Hatherly waited to recognise and greet a friend of his own age, whom he had not seen for ten years. He looked long for a tall, black-haired man of forty-six with an aquiline nose and obstinate mouth; all that he discovered, led thereto by an overwrought boy of nine in black clothes, was a grey and bearded old man with restless eyes and flickering lids, who had been carried down the gangway by one set of men and was seemingly waiting to be carried elsewhere by others. Hatherly took charge and bore his friend to a private nursing home in the country, while he chose a school for Deryk and bought Ripley Court from the Stornaways, as though he were buying a ready-made coat in a storm of rain. Something had to be done very quickly for a man who would be an invalid for the rest of his life; it would be time enough for recriminations later on. "Whatever you think best, per-per-perfectly sat'sfied," was Lancing's unvarying stammered comment, as he sat huddled in bed, staring out of the window and gently scratching at the sheet with long, claw-like fingers. Six months before he had not been satisfied with anything that lacked his seal and imprimatur; he would have cleaned his own windows, if he could, because others did the work less well.

The sight of Lancing's helplessness drove Hatherly to a Quixotic act of sacrifice hardly justified by any claim of friendship. He called his two partners together and told them that he proposed to confine himself in future to the care of the Lancings and their estate. For years Deryk could expect no attention from his father, and he looked at first sight too highly strung to be neglected in any way; for the rest of his life Aylmer Lancing would be unequal to the single control of his own affairs. "I'm not doing this for my own amusement," Hatherly explained ruefully, already half repentant, when his partners mildly expostulated at the unexpected break-up of the firm.

From that day he did nothing for his own amusement, and such amusement as came to him was slight. He was sacrificing himself in middle life to a dying man, whose will was never so masterful as when he lay nearest to death. After the first month he deliberately took stock and asked himself whether he could possibly continue. His own will was being so steadily checked, disregarded and set aside that he felt the lines of his personality becoming blurred; he was treated like a down-trodden wife (as, had he known it, Gwendolen Lancing had come to be treated within two years of Deryk's birth); he was becoming an obedient shadow like the recently engaged male nurse (but he was *paid* to be docile and unresentful). Yet what good did this stock-taking do? He could not abandon the Lancings, if he wanted to—any more than a swimmer could stand and watch a child drowning; you might not like spoiling your clothes, but it could not be avoided. . . . Sir Aylmer brooded for months over his dead wife and his own powerlessness, vaguely conscious that for years before her death they had drifted apart; not knowing why; wondering why she had become so inanimate; then he would feel a tremor of deceptive strength returning to his worn-out body, and for a week would plan, direct and execute with the fury of his own youth. The spasm of energy would pass as abruptly as it had come, and he would sink back into morose inertia, varied by outbursts of violent irritability.

The neighbouring houses, suspicious of American millionaires, spent a cautious year in testing him, only to find that their lives held nothing in common, and that he was too preoccupied to meet them. Hatherly tried to find him society by choosing suitable tenants, but of all who came to settle on the estate Colonel Penrose, a widower in retirement from the Indian Army, was the only one who established a foothold in the house. Three years earlier Penrose had got at loggerheads with the War Office, and had been told in effect that, interesting as were his views on army reform, he must do his prescribed work in the prescribed way or send in his papers. Petulant and never dreaming that anyone would get rid of a man merely because he was enlightened, Penrose resigned his commission, cut short a career that he loved, and returned to England with his two children, to live narrowly in a cottage on the fringe of the Ripley estate, to lose odd sums of money by speculation and to bandy grievances with his landlord. After his fever in Panama and consequent retirement from business, Raymond Stornaway would run down for a week-end, in part out of old regard and sympathy, in part to discuss the great philanthropic organisations to which he was devoting the rest of his life; of other society there was none, and Deryk himself was so highly wrought that during his school holidays he was deliberately kept away from the morbid hush of the sick-room. Not until he was halfway through his time at Eton, did his father seem to take cognisance of him; it was Hatherly who chose schools, paid bills and administered reprimands, who visited him for all school functions and carried him abroad for the holidays. The sight of the boy, with his mother's dark hair and nervous, quickly-dilating eyes, always recalled the eight years of married life on Riverside Drive, when all the world with its sunshine and flowers lay before the Lancings and their boy, and when he had for some reason failed to get the best out of life; he could never look back on that time without breaking into savage self-pity.

When Deryk was sixteen, his father discovered him. For a few days at the beginning or close of the holidays they had met at Ripley Park, each confusedly regarding the other more as an institution than as a blood relation. They had never talked together nor exchanged confidences until Hatherly raised the question what was to be done when Deryk left school. The question came with a shock, and Aylmer found himself summoning his thoughts from afar and concentrating them on an absorbing problem. Hitherto he had ridden the hobbies that his neighbours suggested, demolishing and rebuilding half the house, collecting black-figure pottery, laying out the gardens afresh, even starting a racing stable. His interests were now focussed on his family, as they had been once before when he and his wife dreamed and made plans for their boy. It seemed that Deryk had been at a public school for two and a half years; that he was a scholar of promise, more than a year younger than any boy in his division; that he could look forward to an academic career of distinction; that, so far as an outsider could judge, he had achieved a certain popularity. From a supplementary account of their holidays on the continent, it appeared that he could speak fluent French and German, and was at home with Italian and Spanish. He was credited further with great musical talent, but of this Hatherly was not in a position to judge.

As Lancing wheeled himself about the house or drove into the neighbouring forest or onto the Downs for his daily exercise, life seemed less empty, and the routine of food, work, recreation and rest a shade less wearisome. He had handed on to his son the seeds of his own vigour and aptitude before they were paralysed; there was a possibility of living again in his son's body. Thereafter Deryk had to spend rather more of his holidays at home, and his father talked, a little nervously, about the future, and let fall anecdotes about the past. The boy certainly did not pass muster in his present shape; he looked delicate and neurotic, he was absorbed in a world of pictures, books and music, from which he could only be roused with difficulty to interest himself in the material life of living men and women, and, when the house filled, as it inevitably did, with a heterogeneous gathering of men and women who were leaving a mark on the administration and politics of their country, he had a habit of shutting himself up in the library and neglecting not only his father's guests but his own opportunities.

Hatherly looked on with misgiving and a pang of something that he would not admit was jealousy; it was but natural that Aylmer Lancing should become absorbed in his own son, that he should seek to mould and direct him, but he was enjoying the fruit of others' work without consulting them or being guided by their opinions and experience. Now, if there were one thing more clear than another, it was that Deryk ought not to spend much time at Ripley Court, where the only youthful society was provided by little Idina Penrose, who was his confidante, slave and hero-worshipper; he ought not to live in that silent, deserted house with that pack of old men. Had not Forsyte, the local doctor, described him as "an old man's child"? He was highly strung, and there was every likelihood of his brain's exhausting his body and nerves. Sir Aylmer seemed to regard the great house as an empty frame and Deryk as a canvas that had to be covered with a suitable picture; he would not let him develop naturally. . . . From Eton the boy passed to Magdalen and in four years won two firsts and a university prize. He was in the running for a fellowship, but his father intervened arbitrarily with a wider ambition. Hatherly found difficulty in curbing his impatience. . . .

"It is not my idea that you should bury yourself in Oxford," Lancing told his son at the end of a silent dinner on the night after the class lists had been published. "With the money that I can put at your back——"

"What's the good of money, if I can't do what I want?" Deryk interrupted impatiently. "I haven't got to earn my own living, so why can't I lead the kind of life I want to?"

"Money carries responsibilities, Deryk. You can't just put your feet up and read a book."

"I don't propose to. I propose to work, but it's work of the kind that appeals to me. I've been at it for a year or two; they say up there that I shall do it well; why can't I go on with it?"

"You're only twenty-three," said Sir Aylmer. "You've seen very little of the world——"

"I don't want to see the beastly world."

"We shall not do any good by discussing this further."

Since first he went to school, fifteen years earlier, Deryk had been broken to the habit of obedience; the habit had never been strained, for his wants were simple and had generally been gratified.

"I am proposing that you should go round the world . . . ," continued Lancing, leaning back with his bony hands on the arms of his chair, like a patriarch giving judgment. Deryk looked despairingly at Hatherly, but no support was forthcoming; Hatherly had deserted him.

"I *want* to try for this fellowship," he objected, rather breathlessly.

"It will be time enough to consider what you really want to do, when you come back."

"It'll be too late then."

"You are of age, Deryk," said Lancing, in conclusion, "but as long as you live here I shall expect my wishes to be consulted."

For two days the boy carried about a scowling face and a tragic manner; on the third he capitulated, after a talk in which Hatherly came like an unsuccessful ambassador to explain that, so long as Aylmer Lancing controlled the finances of the house, opposition was impracticable. "You haven't got the fellowship yet, but, if you had, I take it that you wouldn't want to break with your father and try to live on it. You've got to give in, so you may as well do it with a good grace." A month later the travellers set out, and, before the boat reached Alexandria, he had forgotten his wild charges of injustice and tyranny in the rapture of entering new worlds; their time-table was thrown into disorder at the outset, and from Bombay he cabled home for leave to extend their programme. His father smiled a little wearily and cabled back his approval; he had taken the trouble to think this thing out, and it would save so much time and acrimony if other people would think a little more instead of hastily opposing him and afterwards admitting that he was right. No one ever knew how much he grudged the extra year's absence, nor how hard he found it to insist on Deryk's going; but the boy had to be taught by his own observation and experience what would be expected of his position; he must see wherein he was different from his fellows. No doubt it was very interesting to pore over his books and establish where a caravan route had run three hundred years before Christ, but that sort of thing led nowhere at all, it could not be combined with the social and political power which his money would give him; when Deryk was less of a precocious schoolboy, he would not want to combine it. . . .

The clock on the mantelpiece began to strike eleven, and Sir Aylmer's shaggy, grey eyebrows met in a straight, frowning bar; it was intolerable that after two years' polishing Deryk should be the same heedless, undisciplined, self-centred, mannerless hobbledehoy.

"Ring that bell, Ted," he ordered peremptorily. "I *will* know where Deryk's got to."

"What are you going to do with him now that you've got him home?" Hatherly asked lazily, as he walked to the fireplace. Sir Aylmer's tone suggested that sharp words were going to be exchanged.

"You asked me that at dinner," was the curt reply. "It depends on what sort of man you've made of him."

"Oh, I've done nothing. There was no need. You see, he doesn't drink, doesn't gamble—he's too fastidious to have any vices——"

"No entanglements?" asked Sir Aylmer. His voice was even, but the watchful, deep-set eyes were curious.

"He's entirely uninterested in women, except to idealise them from a distance."

"That by itself won't save a man," said Sir Aylmer drily.

"Well, he gave me no trouble of any kind."

Sir Aylmer sat in reflective silence for a moment.

"I suppose it wasn't generally known who he was," he suggested at length, as though pursuing his own line of thought.

5

When his father's summons at length reached him, Deryk left the library and bounded through the west corridor and hall in shirt sleeves, with his hands and arms overflowing with little boxes and a tangle of lace and silk. He took an active pleasure in slamming a door or two and whistling as he ran; the silence of the house was a thing to be resisted.

"I've been unpacking," he explained in answer to Sir Aylmer's look of enquiry.

"Talbot would have done that," said his father shortly, though his expression of sternness relaxed at sight of his lithe, handsome son. "It's part of his work."

Deryk wriggled his shoulder-blades impatiently.

"I can't stand a crowd of footmen fussing round me!" he exclaimed. "I'm half afraid to blow my own nose in this house. Besides, he'd have smashed everything. Look here, dad, you said at dinner that you'd got a mob of people coming here; I've been selecting suitable presents. When are they due, and who's coming?"

"To-morrow," answered Sir Aylmer. "By the way, Deryk, you'll remember not to go about in shirt sleeves, when they're here? It's rather a weakness of yours."

"I'll behave like a perfect gentleman," sighed Deryk, with humorous resignation. "Who's coming?"

"Several people. Raymond and his niece; George and Beryl Oakleigh—I don't think you know them; Summertown and his sister; one of the Dainton boys and his sister—a good many of your friends, and a few of mine—I can't give them you out of my head. The night after next I've arranged for a little dance and invited the people round about here; to-morrow we shall just have a quiet dinner to ourselves, no one from outside."

Deryk nodded without any great show of interest. Yolande Stornaway was an old ally, and her name alone was welcome.

"Is Dina Penrose coming?" he asked. "I've chosen her rather a jolly necklace."

"I'm not having anyone from outside to-morrow," his father repeated. "The hounds are meeting here on the morning of the dance—Pebbleridge rang up to ask if it would amuse you; the fixture was for Bishop's Cross itself, but I hear that's under water; those are the only arrangements I've made. I thought we might talk things over before anyone comes. Before that, though, I want to know what you are thinking of doing with yourself now you're home."

Deryk stretched out his foot and pulled a small table to the side of his chair. On this he carefully set out the boxes and trinkets which he had been carrying, tossed the lace onto the floor, and got up in search of a cigarette. He knew that the question must come, but he was in no hurry to answer it; and he hated the theatrical setting—return of heir from abroad, *conseil de famille,* the choice of a career, family solicitor in attendance—"a serious moment in your life, my dear boy."

"I wasn't thinking of doing anything in particular," he said at length, throwing his head back and watching through half-closed eyes the wavering spirals of smoke. "I've got my books here and I can work at them. It's too late to go back to Oxford, and I don't know that I could settle down there now after wandering about so much." He looked at his father, a little embarrassed by his silence and intimidated, as always, by these stiff, unsympathetic encounters in which he was ever outnumbered. "I want to start again where I left off two years ago—there's a tremendous lot to be done; I should work here part of the time and part of the time in London, I should have to go abroad a good bit. As I say, there's a tremendous lot to do, and, er——" He hesitated on finding that he was repeating himself, "Well, that was my scheme. It's just a question whether you care to find the money."

Sir Aylmer sat for several moments in a thoughtful silence, stroking his chin between thumb and first finger.

"You've never considered a more—public career?" he asked at length. "Parliament?" Deryk grimaced in disfavour. "The Diplomatic? I don't want you to feel later on that you've buried your talents."

Deryk shrugged his shoulders and sat down on the edge of the club fender.

"Any talents I've got are purely academic," he said. "I don't take the least interest in this House of Commons racket, and I shouldn't be the least good at it. As for the

Diplomatic—my dear dad, I happened to know one or two forsaken brutes marooned in our different embassies. Nothing like good enough."

Sir Aylmer said nothing, and his fingers began to toy with the trinkets on the table. Rejoicing to break up the family council so quickly, Deryk jumped up, pushed Hatherly's chair round, so that he could see, and prepared to explain. There were conventional ivory elephants, large and small, moonstone brooches and necklaces, filigree balls and ebony boxes, brass pots from Benares and trays from Morocco—an impetuous, youthful and undiscriminating collection.

"I've got a Buddha for you in the library," he told his father. "And one of my only two tiger skins for Hats. Genuine old mantilla, guaranteed to pass through a wedding ring; Yolande Stornaway can have that. I want to see Yolande again. . . . Rich blue silk kimono, as worn by all the best people in Formosa, that's for Sally Farwell; you said she was coming, didn't you? A few hundred yards of Teneriffe lace—not yet allocated. A sumptuously embroidered——"

"This is a beautiful thing, Deryk," interrupted Sir Aylmer.

The boy threw aside a crimson silk tea-gown and looked at the case which his father was holding. Circling three times round the velvet boss lay a pearl necklace of exquisite harmony and colour.

"*Is*n't he a ripper?" cried Deryk, his eyes shining with pleasure. "I got him in Paris for Dina Penrose; I wanted to give her something decent."

Sir Aylmer raised his eyebrows and looked wonderingly at his son.

"My dear boy! you mustn't go giving expensive presents of jewelry in this way!" he exclaimed.

"We can afford it," Deryk answered easily.

"That's not the point. You *must* know that a girl of her age can't accept pearls from a man of your age. I've never heard of such a thing."

Deryk laughed and shook his head.

"She'll take it from me all right," he predicted. "We've always been brought up in each other's pockets——"

Sir Aylmer drummed impatiently on the arm of his chair.

"But surely I wrote and told you——"

"About the smash? I know. Well, I don't suppose she's got anyone to give her things now. I—I wish something could be done for her, dad."

"Something *has* been done," answered Sir Aylmer impatiently. "She's living rent free at Ivy Cottage, I've made myself responsible for the boy's education, and I've found her a position as companion in the neighbourhood, and there she must work out her own salvation. Please stick to one thing at a time. If she were my daughter, and you gave her this necklace, I should forbid her to accept it; so would her father, if he were still alive; so would any father. To you it may seem all very foolish and conventional, but the world's prejudices have to be respected."

Deryk's lips parted for an impatient rejoinder, but Hatherly caught his eye and frowned warningly.

"I'm blest if I can see what all the fuss is about," the boy grumbled with only a partially successful attempt at good-humour. "It's your money, though, and if you say I'm not to——"

Sir Aylmer interrupted with a loftily tolerant gesture of the hand.

"I don't want there to be any question of my saying what you may or may not do, Deryk. I can assure you that it wouldn't be considered good form for you to give such a present, and I know that after that you won't waste another thought on the thing. Going back to the other question, my father sent me into a profession for which I had no taste or aptitude; I don't want to repeat that mistake with you, but, whatever else you may do, you'll have to give considerable time to mastering the first principles of business. You're going to inherit a great deal of money——"

Deryk's attention had wandered, and he was playing with a cavalcade of ivory elephants. At his father's last words, however, he looked up.

"How much *are* you worth, dad?" he enquired.

Sir Aylmer looked at him and then looked away at the fire; as the silence lengthened, Deryk's eyes met Hatherly's, and the two waited with conscious expectancy.

"How much do you think?" Sir Aylmer said at length. "Please stop fidgeting with those elephants."

Deryk flushed at the reproach, and dug his hands into his pockets.

"I've honestly no idea," he said. "A million?"

This time his father hardly hesitated at all; his mind was made up, and his eyes, with a question in them, turned for confirmation to Hatherly, who answered with a quick nod.

"More than that, Deryk; my annual income is over a million."

Deryk whistled, and sat staring at his father with wide-eyed astonishment.

"But how the deuce d'you manage to get rid of it?" he demanded.

"That is a question which you'll have to answer in your time," Sir Aylmer replied, as he looked at the clock and motioned to Hatherly for help in getting out of his chair.

CHAPTER II

WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE

The old believe everything; the middle-aged suspect everything; the young know everything.
OSCAR WILDE: Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.

I

ON the afternoon of the following day the house-party began to assemble. Deryk felt that the whole thing was rather unnecessary, and would probably be very boring at a time when he wanted to be busy tidying his books and seeing what had happened to all his possessions in the last two years. There was a pomposity, too, about his father at such times which was rather exasperating, far too much fuss and nonsense about "the return of the young heir" and the young heir's general deportment. But it was something to fill the great barrack of a house, and he had not come across any of these people for years. He entered into the enthusiasm of the servants, who were making such preparations as Ripley Court had not seen since it changed hands, for the coming-of-age celebrations four years earlier had—perhaps mercifully—been cut short by one of Sir Aylmer's sudden attacks of illness. He flitted from room to room, asking questions and pouring out suggestions; only at rare intervals did his mind revert to his father's conversation overnight. At tea-time he was discovered on the stairs, working out rough calculations on the back of an envelope.

"You'll change out of those clothes before anyone comes, won't you, Deryk?" said Sir Aylmer, with a look of disfavour at a shapeless Norfolk jacket and flannel trousers. "What are you doing there?"

Deryk smothered a sigh and wrote down the last line of figures.

"It's what you said last night," he answered. "A million a year; divide by fifty; that's roughly £20,000 a week. Divide by seven; say £3,000 a day. Twenty-four hours in a day; that's roughly £120 an hour. Two pounds a minute!" He looked up from the paper, and his eyes dilated in bewilderment. "Had you ever worked it out like that, dad? Two pounds a minute—a fiver while we've been talking—night and day, summer and winter!"

Sir Aylmer leaned over the side of his wheeled chair and took the paper.

"It's rather more than that," he said with the detachment of accuracy. "I said a million, to put it in round figures, but it was well over that the last time I took stock, nearly two years ago, at the time that I built the new wing for the Crawleigh hospital."

"When they made you a Bart?" Deryk asked. "Why didn't you stick out for a peerage?"

Sir Aylmer frowned and made no answer. He had no desire for a peerage, and had not welcomed the baronetcy. It was too much and too little. If these honours meant anything, they should not be given to any rich man who spared a fraction of his wealth for charity; if they meant nothing, he would sooner be without them. He had a position of his own, which he had made for himself; he did not choose to be tolerated in company with half a dozen company promoters and Rand mine-owners like Sir Adolf Erckmann of Priory Court. He was not going to buy himself into a society which thought itself too good for him; either England had a place for him in its social scale, or it had not; he was not going to out-bid Erckmann in surrounding himself with the more venal section of the impoverished nobility. On the whole, the English aristocracy and he were both too good for that. In the early days he had been tempted to tell Sir Roger Dainton or Lord Pebbleridge that their social influence was a small thing to a man who had broken the Smelting and Refining Combine, that Lord Pebbleridge's scattered 80,000 acres bulked small beside the control of transportation in eleven states. A trifling change in the freight tariff of the Illinois-Iowa-Colorado Railroad would enable corn to be grown at a profit on the Bishop's Cross estate. . . . As for Dainton—Sir Aylmer sometimes smiled as he drove far and wide through Sussex and Hampshire, idly counting the public houses consecrated "entirely" to Dainton's Melton ales; he could cripple Sir Roger and reduce Lady Dainton's self-esteem by inflating the price of glucose; it would be a costly lesson to administer, but he could afford it, while Dainton could not. Even his neighbour Dawson, an unpretentious bachelor dyspeptic, made a favour of recommending his name to the Lord Lieutenant for the Commission of the Peace—they had to be so careful in the Home Counties; Lancing half thought of describing the part that he had played, for purposes of his own, in getting Cleveland returned for the Presidency. But they would not understand; certainly they would not believe him. "Things," he had often been told, "must be so different out in America."

"Why didn't you stick out for a peerage?" Deryk persisted, his face flushed with the crude possibilities of the newly-discovered power.

"Why on earth should I?" his father demanded shortly. "I can't attend the House of Lords."

"My hat! I wish I'd known about it before!"

Sir Aylmer wheeled himself slowly back to his study. Deryk was talking like a schoolboy; it was a pity to have told him so soon.

"Don't be late," he threw back over his shoulder.

Deryk looked at his watch and strolled away to the library. If his father had spared him that reminder, he would have gone upstairs and changed his clothes at once, but he would not tolerate being ordered about; there was plenty of time, and he would not greatly care if he *were* late. The library was in calamitous confusion. . . . He stood in a deep bay, reading the titles of the books that surrounded him on three sides; it was here that he had gathered the material for what he once hoped would be the work of years, perhaps the study of a lifetime. In certain respects the Greeks of Pericles' day had raised civilisation to its high-water mark, and hitherto no one had worthily written their social history. He wanted to know more of their daily life than the books gave him—what the slaves did in the evening, whether they had a sort of workingmen's club to go to—recognised meeting places. He wanted to know how they lived, how they dressed—it could be very hot and very cold in Athens—where they got their imported clothes from, *how* they got them, how they did their chartering, whether you definitely had a corner down at the Piraeus where people bid against each other for freight, how far they understood insurance and dealt in that—human requirements were always so similar and so unchanging, when you came to read history; you had a labour problem now, *they* had a slave problem then, a feminist movement now, a feminist movement then; and, if you wanted warm clothes and didn't grow furry animals yourselves, you had to build ships, put them into the fur trade, insure them—which brought him back to his point, that you might be certain, even without your Demosthenes to back the hypothesis, that the Piraeus *did* have its own primitive Lloyds, that they had their insurance brokers and underwriters. . . . He had wanted so desperately to spend his whole time on that, reconstructing the social life of Athens until he had perfect knowledge of the ordinary Greek's mental equipment. If you took *him* and planted him down in equatorial Africa, you could be sure that he would have a house built on certain lines, domestic habits, times, procedure of a certain kind, the average educated Englishman's house and life generally, in short. You would know he was English by the breakfast that people on the plantation had to eat. Everyone knew that a Roman's mental equipment was equally well-marked—that he didn't feel comfortable in a new country until he'd revolutionised the water supply, got down his tesselated pavement, deposited a piece of Rome in Scythia or Gaul or Egypt, forced *his* habits and *his* personality on the natives. You could see him later building an arena, as the Spaniards built bull rings in Central

America and as the English laid out golf links in Nigeria. Well, later on he wanted to know the habits, the daily life, the domestic entourage of the average Greek who would be left behind to settle in Asia Minor after Alexander's death. He wanted to know what house he *always* built, what labour arrangement he *always* made, what his average relations were with the people that Alexander had just conquered, he wanted to know the precise stamp that a time-expired soldier of Alexander left on his surroundings wherever he was planted, just as historians knew to some extent the kind of stamp that a Roman legionary left on *his* surroundings. And, when he had done that, when he had exhausted every source of information on the influence of Greek civilisation upon the world of those days, he wanted to find out how and why it was influenced in turn: how far the Greek in Syria or Egypt forgot his common parentage and assimilated himself to the Syrian or the Egyptian, why the descendant of Pericles became the degenerate three-card-trick sharp that you found him under the early Emperors, or as the chroniclers of the time affected to find him. He wanted to describe the decline and fall of Greek civilisation. . . . Deryk stopped suddenly, as a horn sounded far away down the drive. He had been dreaming, as he used to dream at Oxford, of a people and a country that he loved as a man might love a woman, a people that he wanted to bring back to life, giving the whole of himself to the work. . . . And now other people with golf clubs and suit cases were coming to slap him on the back. . . . And he was not even going to be ready in time to receive them!

He hurried to his room by a side staircase, pulling off coat and waistcoat by the way. The one good thing about this desolating party came quite inadvertently; it had been improvised so suddenly that old and new invitations were clashing, applicants for charity would be rubbing shoulders with the painstakingly selected young women who were always being paraded for his delectation and choice, and among the applicants for charity was Dr. Manisty, the well-known Hellenist, who now came to Sir Aylmer because after twenty years' work he could go on no longer without assistance. Deryk decided to make Manisty's acquaintance as soon as possible and to use his influence and representations to escape from this nonsensical social business and get back to work. It was so curious that his father seemed lukewarm, when a few hundreds a year were all that was needed. . . .

The hall was beginning to fill by the time that he had changed and hurried downstairs. Raymond Stornaway, plump, untidy and prematurely white-haired, was standing in front of the fire, drinking tea and talking with characteristic violence of diction to a delicate-looking young man with rimless glasses, a stoop and an expression of disillusionment (Deryk afterwards discovered him to be George Oakleigh, the Radical propagandist, descending upon Ripley Court in search of funds). Gerald Deganway, of the Foreign Office, and Jack Summertown, with whom he had shared digs at Oxford, were drinking whisky and soda at a side table with Valentine Arden, the novelist; they hailed him vociferously as he ran down the stairs, three at a time, and surged round him with welcoming hands and eager questions. For ten minutes there had been so much chatter and bustle, the ring of so many cups and the scrape of so many matches that Sir Aylmer had had himself wheeled back to his study and was receiving his guests one at a time. Deryk threaded his way in and out of the little groups by fire or table, shaking hands with everybody once and occasionally more than once, to be on the side of safety. It was unnecessary to know their names, and his share of the conversation seemed restricted to "Very well indeed, thanks. Only last night. Oh, a great time, thanks. Honestly I've no idea; haven't had much time to think about it, have I?" This last was in answer to the invariable question what he proposed to do with himself now that he was back in England. Once, twice, twelve times he could stand. . . .

"Cheero! Deryk! I'm jolly glad to see you again!"

A slight, demurely mischievous girl with a pale face and auburn hair darted from the shadows by the front door and caught him by both hands.

"Cheero, Yolande," he answered. "Promise not to ask which part of my most interesting travels I enjoyed most, and I won't ask how you or your people are. The question begins to pall."

"So did my people," Yolande Stornaway answered with laughing eyes. "You know I've run away from home? Oh yes. There was a frightful row; I'll tell you all about it some time, but now I want you to meet my particular friend Dr. Manisty. Uncle Raymond's brought him down to squeeze endowments out of your poor father; *I* call it an abuse of hospitality, but you know what darling uncle is. Come and say 'How do you do?' to the pretty gentleman."

She slipped her arm through his and dragged him away to a spectacled and absent-minded scholar who was spilling tea with one hand and with the other inverting his saucer to inspect the marks on the china. By 1913 and in despite of criticism by the learned and disparagement by the rich, Felix Manisty had excavated more of Silver Greece than any ten other men of the century; he had discovered the site of Hellenopolis in Asia Minor, when earnest young German students wrote theses to prove that no such city existed and, alternatively, that he had not discovered it; with his unaided hands he had laid bare the posts of the Lion Gate and traced the course of the Street of Bridges at a time when Morrison-Grahame of Edinburgh and Pawley of King's, abandoning minor controversies, were jointly protesting in print that a city built by one of Alexander's generals was too late for their period and, by implication, not worth excavating. It was twelve years' work, however, and Manisty had turned forty. For six months of the year, when Hellenopolis lay in the grip of malaria, he lectured, exhibited, catalogued and wrote; it was in the office of the "Utopia Review" that he had chanced upon Yolande Stornaway, flushed with enfranchisement from her family and important with the first, fine, careless rapture of free-lance journalism; she had instantly introduced him to Raymond on the Terrace of the House of Commons with the words, "Uncle dear, will you make one of your magics? If you don't catch one of your rich friends for Dr. Manisty, we shall never dig up Hellenopolis."

"That, my dear, would be very serious," answered Raymond. "Who or what is Hellenopolis?"

Thereupon a normally silent man with a high forehead, gentle grey eyes and a shy stammer had eloquently demonstrated the relative positions of the Lion Gate and the Street of Bridges with the aid of an unrolled umbrella with two broken ribs, a discoloured straw hat, two pairs of spectacles and a silver watch lacking the minute hand. Raymond looked on apprehensively as the mild-mannered enthusiast divested himself of an obviously ready-made coat and spread it on the Terrace to mark the Black Mountain; apprehension ripened to alarm, when the waistcoat followed the coat and a knot of curious onlookers gathered to listen. When, however, Yolande asked for a promise of help and an opinion of her new friend, Raymond replied from the heart that Manisty possessed some of the worst clothes and best manners in the world and that his zeal should be rewarded. The visit to Ripley Court, planned before the date of Deryk's return was known, followed automatically.

"If you're touching the gov'nor for money, sir," said Deryk, as they shook hands, "the least you can do is to ask me to come out with you the next time you go digging."

"L-look at me and be warned," Manisty answered.

Yolande glanced quickly from the one to the other and decided that she could leave them to take care of themselves. They talked until the last keys had been surrendered and the dressing gong was beginning to sound; and their conversation was continued briefly when Manisty appeared at Deryk's door in shirt sleeves, holding two crumpled dress ties in his hands and stammering in mild indignation.

"How the d'deuce does one manage these abominations?" he demanded plaintively. "I sp-pecially told the m-man in the shop to give me ready-made ones. B-by the way, how do you c-come to have heard about Hellenopolis?"

"Well, when you came to lecture at Oxford——" Deryk began.

"Now, don't t-tell me you attended those!" said Manisty, facing his companion squarely. "Great God, that makes five! The Vice-Chancellor and the Regius Professor c-came out of politeness; there was a B-Balliol man, who attended all university lectures on principle, because they were all the same and all wrong; and there was an obstinate old w-widow from North Oxford, who insisted that I was t-talking about the Synoptic Gospels and t-told her friends that I was too long getting to the p-point to be a g-good lecturer. So you were there, too; wha-what a thing is youth!"

"Are you going to take me with you?" Deryk demanded again. "I—I've got a little job of my own; I don't say we shall overlap, but it'll be frightfully good training for me. I think you might!"

"P-put it to your father, my dear fellow. I should have thought, as he's only just g-got you home. . . ."

"He won't mind," Deryk prophesied easily.

When dinner began, he found himself at the foot of the long table between Beryl Oakleigh and Yolande Stornaway. On the far side of them sat Lord Summertown and Valentine Arden, and the party grew graver and older as it approached the high-backed chair in which Sir Aylmer sat with his head drooping forward and his hands on the carved arms. The pink-shaded lamps softened the eyes and rounded the features of the women; the black coats of the men melted into the surrounding darkness, and to Deryk it was as though the room held nothing but white shirt fronts, light dresses, smooth faces and sleek heads collected and bent over gleaming plate; a lingering scent of carnations rose and spread from the heavy cut-glass bowls, and behind the chairs, too deft and silent to interrupt the murmur of a dozen conversations, shirt fronts, blue liveries, immobile faces and legless bodies moved backwards and forwards between the table and the shadowland by the long wall. With an actuality never before felt, Deryk suddenly appreciated that the garniture of the room, living and dead, would one day be his, with the power to issue his own invitations and surround himself with his own guests. They would come at his bidding, as they came now; the potent two pounds a minute would bring Sally Farwell, who had been standing in the social slave-market, rather young and wistful, when he went abroad; and her aunt, the old Duchess of Ross, who always tried to interest Sir Aylmer in politics; and Yolande; and all the others.

The pride of power gave place to a feeling of short-lived cynicism. Ripley Court always seemed to contain three or four pretty girls, eligibility stamped and tooled on their well-connected names and prefixes; they were gracious and friendly, but Deryk wondered how much sincerity there was in it all, how long their favour would survive the sudden collapse of the Lancing Trust Corporation. He half wished that his father had never mentioned the amount of his income; then he laughed at himself for taking himself so seriously.

Yolande Stornaway turned to him a clear-cut, boyish, pale profile, surmounted with auburn hair parted over one eye and sweeping low over the opposite ear.

"Are you glad to see me, old man?" she began. "I suppose everybody's asked you about your travels, so I won't. But I want to know what you're going to do now."

"I *have* touched upon *that* subject," Deryk interrupted diffidently.

"You're as easily bored as ever," she commented. "Deryk, d'you ever contemplate what you'll be like at forty? But you'll have cut your throat in sheer ennui before then. I wish your father'd lose his money or something."

Deryk sighed extravagantly.

"You're rather vindictive, you know," he commented.

"I've always been rather fond of you, so I don't want to see you wasting yourself."

Deryk found the positive young face and assured, staccato manner diverting. No one ever knew what Yolande would say or do next for she was entirely honest with herself and frank with others; also she seemed to be without physical or moral fear. For three years she had dutifully struggled through the London season from April to July with two elder sisters and a conventional, dispirited mother; from August to October she had moved restlessly from house to house; from November till February she had hunted in Wiltshire. Then Lord Stornaway would punctually carry his family to Cannes, and there she remained until Easter and the coming shadows of a new season. At worst, she reasoned, the programme would be repeated until the invitations ceased to come; at best she would marry and spend five and twenty years bearing and rearing a family, to shepherd it in her own middle life through the social wilderness from which she was trying to escape. And then she would be an old woman. And then she would cease to be anything at all. It was not good enough, she told herself; the time had come for her to follow the Stornaway tradition of quarrelling with the rest of the family. Already she had been mixing in a suspect and undesirable world of art, letters and reprehensible politics. At nineteen she was buying Fabian Society publications and devouring them in bed, to argue later with her father's friends, who smiled and patted her hand kindly, and with her father, who wondered in exasperation where she had been stuffing her head with all this nonsense. The Fabian Society led to a distant and temporarily exciting acquaintance with a number of authors and journalists; she heard Gilbert Chesterton and Bernard Shaw debating publicly. George Oakleigh, bored but tolerant of others' enthusiasms, took her to dinners of the Ragamuffins' Club and promised to read any articles that she cared to submit to "Peace." Valentine Arden, whose face she had slapped in circumstances which neither revealed, introduced her magnanimously to the editor of the "Utopia Review."

On her twenty-first birthday the long prepared attack was launched, and, illimitably rich with three hundred pounds a year of her own, she moved into two rooms at the top of Stafford's Inn, threw herself on the indulgence of her uncle Raymond and wrote a rather breathlessly defiant letter to her father, who with Stornaway choleric decision forbade her ever to enter his house again. Raymond thereupon engaged her a middle-aged housekeeper and motored to Wiltshire and back in a day for the pleasure of telling his brother not to make a fool of himself. A guarded reconciliation was effected as soon as Lord Stornaway's ruffled plumage had been smoothed, and for a year Yolande had been infinitely busy and deliriously happy, dashing off rather juvenile articles and sketches and feeling, as she ingenuously boasted, that she was meeting the men and women who *did* things.

"That's my career. Now, are you going to sit and moulder like all these?" she demanded of Deryk, waving a slender, disrespectful arm to indicate in the dark hinterland of the room the looming gilt frames in which his ancestors were imprisoned.

Deryk looked down the long table to the high, carved chair where his father sat silent and almost motionless.

"What would you do in my place?" he asked quietly.

"Do? I'd——" She stopped to laugh. "I don't know, Deryk. Perhaps I haven't been quite fair to you; you are so *horribly* rich and you're the only one. But you did so well at Oxford that I should simply hate to see you vegetating here."

"I want to go out with your friend Manisty his next trip," said Deryk; "I'm going to get leave from the guv'nor to-night."

Yolande's grey eyes brightened, and she nodded approvingly.

"Well, that's good enough. *That's* not mouldering. But I always feel that we're so frightfully tied up by what's gone before—our houses, traditions, what some musty old idiot laid down as the life we ought to lead."

Deryk nodded without speaking. Behind his father's silence he could not help thinking that ambitions were beginning to form for the heir of the Lancing Trust Corporation to fulfil.

That night, when the women were gone to their rooms and the men had gathered for a last drink, he slipped away from the smoking-room and sought out his father. Sir Aylmer was being undressed and helped into bed, and, when Benson withdrew, Deryk repeated the substance of his conversation with Manisty. Sir Aylmer sat with closed eyes, offering neither criticism nor suggestion until Deryk had done. Then he opened his eyes wearily for a moment and sank lower into the bed.

"We'll discuss this later," he said. "It's too much to be decided offhand."

Deryk curbed his impatience and spoke with ingratiating reasonableness.

"I only want your formal consent," he explained, "so that I can tell Manisty."

"You'll want money. And there are a great many other considerations."

"Well, now that I've come home, I imagine that you'll settle something on me," Deryk said. "I'm twenty-five, you know. Summertown told me that was what *his* father did, when he came of age. Most people do it, I fancy."

Sir Aylmer panted a little, as he raised himself on the pillows.

"I don't know that I should quote Summertown," he suggested slowly. "Do you feel you know much about the value of money?"

"I suppose one has to find out," Deryk answered a little impatiently. The change of tone was not lost on his father.

"We'll discuss this later," he said, stretching out a wasted, sallow arm to the electric switch. "Good-night, my boy. See that you're down in good time for breakfast."

2

Deryk lay late in bed the following day to remind his father that he was twenty-five and did not care to be ordered down to breakfast in good time or told not to wander about in shirt sleeves when the house was full of guests. At the last moment, however, he recalled that there was a substantial request waiting to be met; for once his father must be humoured, and he hurried down, presided over breakfast with eminent address, arranged for a car to take four of his guests to the Pemberton links and found undisturbed rooms and writing-tables for those who had work to do.

Shortly before eleven the members of the Pebbleridge Hunt began to arrive, and he walked out to the lawn and dispensed hospitality to them. For half an hour a stream of clear-eyed, rather hard-faced men and women trotted up the winding drive between the rhododendrons and assembled in front of the long tables. Amid a volley of greetings and badinage suggestive of a nervous endurance and physical well-being unknown to him, the women bent down and helped themselves to sandwiches and cherry brandy, while the men dismounted and gave more serious attention to the solid promise of the tables. Sir Aylmer sat at his study window; under his eye and supplementing the activities of the footmen, Deryk wandered in and out with a box of cigars in his hand, ducking under the heads of the horses or timorously avoiding their heels. Unknown friends of his father shook his hand and said that they were glad to see him home; a chorus of penetrating voices flung questions from four sides at once about his travels; and all asked what he was going to do now that he was back in England.

"By a designed and appropriate coincidence, the hounds always meet at my place when I'm not in Ireland," drawled George Oakleigh sympathetically, when Deryk returned to the house for a fresh box of cigars.

"This has been laid on for my benefit!" Deryk whispered in despair. "I never suspected the guv'nor of so much humour before. God! how I hate the country and all its works! Oh! thank the Lord! here's Pebbleridge! Now we *shall* get rid of them."

A purple-faced man, almost bursting out of his coat, rode in front of a black, white and tan wake into the middle of the lawn, shortly acknowledging the greetings of his friends with a jerk of two fingers to his cap and blaspheming freely at a girl whose restive mare had cannoned into him. Catching sight of Deryk, he shook hands and accepted a cigar, hoping gruffly that he had enjoyed himself abroad.

"What are you goin' to do with yourself now?" he enquired, throwing away one match and striking another. "Comin' out with us?"

"We've all been asking him that," said the Secretary.

"I really don't know," Deryk answered for what seemed the fortieth time.

"You'd better. Give you good sport." The restive mare bumped him again, and he turned to the embarrassed rider with elaborate sarcasm.

"In case you don't know, madam, I bring my hounds here to be ridden over—there's one your brute hasn't kicked yet—and I come here myself so that people who haven't learned to ride can steady 'emselves by cannonin' me. Huntin' 's a secondary consideration." He turned to the Secretary, as the mare quieted down and trotted away into safety. "If that beauty comes out again, Charles, I take hounds home. Now then, get a move on; we're late as usual. Good-bye, Lancing; thank your father for me."

Deryk stood on the steps, watching the cavalcade ride off, followed by an indeterminate tweed-coated army of cyclists and the entire child-population of Aston Ripley. As the jodelling voice of the huntsman grew fainter, he turned with a whimsical smile to Oakleigh.

"I'm so glad to see you're not a sportsman," he remarked.

"You can shoot and remain civilised, I think," Oakleigh answered, looking critically at his companion's slight figure and large, restless eyes.

"I don't shoot, either. In fact, I've not the least idea what either of us is doing here!"

He laughed nervously, looked at his watch and ran upstairs to his bedroom. There was time for a call on his friend Idina Penrose, and, after a longing glance at the controversial pearl necklace, he stuffed his coat pockets with a lace scarf and a medley of amethysts and moonstones. Ivy Cottage, a late seventeenth century house, with small, oak-panelled rooms, open fireplaces, black beamed ceilings and squat bow windows, lay but half a mile away on the northern fringe of the park. Sir Aylmer had put it in repair and connected it with Ripley Court by telephone for the use of his secretary, but, when Colonel Penrose came to him on Hatherly's introduction twelve years before, he consented to let the house at a nominal rent, and at the Colonel's death it had remained with his children. Sir Aylmer never knew that Hatherly had contrived to give him a congenial neighbour, or the two men, widowers both and both disappointed, might not have drawn so instinctively together. Deryk and Idina, with only four years' difference of age, shared the same music master, and the Colonel, behind the pretext of bringing and fetching away his daughter, grasped an opportunity of smoking a succession of pipes with a good listener. The Indian Army provided him with an ample subject of discussion; and the two men were the better friends when each admitted that he had contemplated suicide in the shipwreck of his life. "I had the children," Penrose explained with a shrug. Characteristically, Sir Aylmer cut his own confession short. The one subject which made Penrose uncommunicative was, ironically enough, also the one on which Lancing was best qualified to advise him. Recognising that on his narrow means he could not give his children the education to which he felt they were entitled, Penrose unceasingly sought means of increasing his income. Once or twice he tried to secure pupils for Sandhurst, but the wide-rippling gossip of the Army had fixed on him as a wrong-headed fellow who had been compelled to send in his papers. The orthodox Press rejected his unorthodox contributions, and, when he tried to get out to South Africa as a war correspondent, he found that this trade had to be learned as well as another and that younger men had worked their way before him into the trust of their syndicates. Failing in the quarters where his experience might have helped him, he embarked timidly and a trifle shamefacedly on small financial speculations. Attractive circulars from brokers who were not members of the Stock Exchange, alluring brochures on "How to Double Your Income" led him to dribble away small sums which mounted up to an appreciable total: on his periodical visits to London a friend at his club would work through the official list and stare wonderingly at industrial stocks which paid twelve and fifteen per cent. Penrose interested himself, a hundred pounds at a time, in non-refillable beer bottles, gramaphones and cheap cameras, a method of illumination which was to supersede electric light and a land-development syndicate on the east coast. On the one occasion when he sought advice, his broker remarked a little wearily,

"You wouldn't trust me to lead a battalion into action by the light of nature. Why trust yourself to win against people who make this sort of thing their business?"

"Investments are everybody's business," Penrose rejoined. "Of course, you've a trade union, and, if you don't feel enterprising enough to try new fields, you boycott a thing and won't let anyone else try it."

In a spirit of enterprise, virgin and unwrung, he invested heavily in the New London General Insurance Corporation, selling the last of his humdrum gilt-edged securities to do so. He was in good company, for the largest shareholders were two judges of the High Court; there was a tolerable list of King's Counsel, fashionable doctors and clergymen, and, among the small denominations, a countless number of lodginghouse keepers, widows and the proprietors of small shops and businesses, chiefly in Scotland; all men and women resolved to extract the last penny of interest consonant with safety, all equally opposed by policy and principle to gambling. The directors, no less enterprising than the shareholders, gave the public what the public wanted; the end of insurance was to underwrite risks, and, if one office refused them, another must come forward. In the first year of its life the Corporation was guaranteeing dividends to sea-side hotels and laying odds on the weather for Ascot and Goodwood; and in the sunny springtime between sowing and harvest Colonel Penrose became possessed of a considerable number of ordinary £10 shares with a call of £9 on each. For a while the Corporation prospered on paper, but with the failure of the old Anglo-Hibernian, whose risks it had largely underwritten, the average began to adjust itself. Penrose, with a thousand others, learned that he was likely to lose his holding in the New London and to sacrifice most of his outside interests as well. Lord Justice Bromleigh presided, with a grey face, over a bemused meeting at the Cannon Street Hotel: he stood to lose £90,000 by the full call. "At least he's got a fat pension," muttered the Colonel, as he walked into the street and stood, jostled by the passers-by, wondering where next to go.

The decision was quickly taken out of his hands. An attack of influenza carried him off the same winter: "No stamina, no resistance: didn't try to get round," his doctor told Sir Aylmer. Idina and the boy were left with the £2,000 for which his life had been insured and the vague sympathy of a few rather remote friends. A receiver was appointed shortly before Deryk left England. He learned by fitful flashes of news that a Board of Trade enquiry had been instituted, that the directors were being prosecuted; he had heard two days before that Idina had gone to his father for help. . . .

Ivy Cottage was empty, as he scrambled down the last piece of sloping ground and parted his way through the dripping rhododendron plantation in front of the tiny bare garden. Inside, however, he found a feeble fire burning and a table laid with cold meat and bread. Evidently Idina lunched at home, and there was nothing for it but to wait until she returned. He sat down at the piano with a subtile satisfaction in playing truant, only to rise again impatiently, when he found that it was out of tune. Then he stared out of the window for a while and finally began to search the house for a book or paper; in his ramble he became disagreeably conscious of a certain threadbare economy in the rooms; there was less furniture than formerly, the ornaments seemed to have been tidied away to save dusting, and the gallant efforts of the fire still left the house dank and cold. In one window-seat was a type-writer and a copybook half filled with the shorthand exercises of a faint-hearted beginner. For the first time in his life Deryk came into indirect contact with economy enforced.

The experience was but partially digested, when he saw a figure in black coat and skirt walking with a man from the direction of Aston Ripley. He withdrew from the front door and gravely began to fulfill the unfailing ritual which he had observed every time that he came home to Ripley Court for the holidays, hastily emptying his pockets of the little parcels and boxes, piling them by her plate and tiptoeing to the angle of the stairs, where, by kneeling down and peering through the spiral carved rails, he could watch to see her untying the string. Under her broad black hat it was difficult from above to catch a glimpse of her face, but he watched her enter the house, take off her coat, glance at the mound of parcels and replace them after a cursory inspection. Then she knelt down to warm her hands at the fire; still kneeling, she drew off her gloves, removed the pins from her hat and sighed with contentment, as she drew up an armchair. Two years before, he remembered Idina to have been a slight, under-developed girl of nineteen, the unsentimental companion and willing slave of his holidays; without feeling older himself, he was conscious that she was transformed into a woman; the lines of her figure were more mature, her face had lost the heavy roundness of childhood, indeed, their old friendship was in some way outgrown, and for a moment he was embarrassed, as he had never been before, to find himself alone and so close to her. The firelight flickered warmly on her cloud of fair hair and rather frightened blue eyes; her outstretched fingers shone opalesque, until she wearily covered her eyes with them; then Deryk saw her head droop and her shoulders move with a suppressed sob. Careless whether he frightened her or not, he crept from his hiding-place, whispering "Dina" and then more loudly "Dee-eena," until at last she heard him and turned with a start to the darkened corner of the stairs.

"Dina, it's me, Deryk," he whispered, drawing himself upright. "I've been waiting to give you a present. Dearest child, what were you crying about?"

She jumped up with a little gasp of delight and ran to meet him.

"Oh, Deryk! You've come at last!"

The hunger in her voice sent a responsive thrill through him, and he flung one arm about her slight shoulders, drawing her to him until her tear-wet cheek pressed against the rough tweed of his coat.

"What were you crying about, silly baby?" he repeated.

She drew one hand across her eyes and looked bravely up at him.

"I'm all right now," she said. "Turn to the light, Deryk dear; I want to see what you look like after all this time."

He loosened his hold on her and turned slowly round in the light of the window.

"Yes, I *have* been away," he reminded her reproachfully.

The girl's pale face lost its short-lived smile, and she dropped her eyes.

"I couldn't have written a decent letter, if I'd tried. . . . I *did* try to write," she said, "but it wasn't fit to send you. I missed you, though—dear Deryk, you'll never know how I missed you!"

He caught her hand and held it between his own.

"I hope things are straightening themselves out a bit," he said with husky, unpractised sympathy. "What are you doing with yourself now?"

"I'm companion to old Miss Dawson at the Grange."

She hesitated and looked up at Deryk. Something in his expression prevented her going on.

"That—venomous—old——"

Idina pressed a hand over his lips.

"She's not, Deryk. I've been happier since I've been with her——"

"Only shews how damned unhappy you must have been before," he interrupted, pulling away her hand. "What did she make you cry about?"

"She didn't, honestly."

Deryk's scant patience poured out of him at the ineffectual denial, and he incautiously gripped her arm until she winced with pain.

"She *always* makes *every* companion cry," he told her. "Sorry, Dina, I didn't mean to hurt you. I remember one girl. . . . You've got to get out of this."

Idina looked away. She too remembered a companion of three years before, whom Deryk had discovered, convulsive and red-eyed, trespassing in his father's park to be alone and unmolested. He had called at the Grange, bearded Miss Dawson and expressed himself with the fluency and resource of an undergraduate. Next day, it is true, he had been driven over by his father to make public apology; the apology still rankled as a piece of meaningless, unnecessary injustice, and every instinct of chivalry was outraged at the thought that his father should expose any other girl to the same treatment.

"I can't afford it, Deryk," said Idina. "You see, things have changed a good bit."

"They're going to change a good bit more before you're much older," he rejoined truculently. There was a silence for a few moments; then he looked at his watch. "My hat! I'm going to be late for lunch!"

As he picked up his cap and stick, the girl darted to the table.

"Don't go till I've opened them and seen what's inside," she begged, tugging eagerly at the string on the first of the boxes.

"You can thank me for them to-night," he called back from the door.

"But I shan't see you to-night."

"Yes, you will, stupid. It's the ball; dinner at eight-thirty."

"But, Deryk, I haven't been invited!"

She tried to speak unconcernedly, but there was long-harboured disappointment in her voice.

"As if you needed an invitation!" he answered. "Phillimore probably sent it to the Grange, and Miss Dawson's sitting on it. She would. I'll have a card sent round this afternoon, if you want one, and you've jolly well got to book supper with me. We'll have a cold collation in the gun-room. Good-bye! I've been late for every meal so far, and the guv'nor does get so ridiculously sick about it!"

He mounted the rhododendron-covered knoll at a run, pausing for an instant on the top to wave; at the same moment Idina turned in the low doorway for a last sight of him. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shining, though she looked flustered by his rapid disposal of her; a faint, happy "good-bye" floated between them before he plunged into the dripping shrubs; ten minutes later he was hurrying, wet to the waist, through the hall of Ripley Court. Idina had certainly improved in the last two years. . . .

As soon as luncheon was over he decoyed his guests into the billiard-room and slipped away to give instructions for a new card to be sent to Ivy Cottage. Old Phillimore, his father's secretary and one of his own staunchest allies, was dozing in an armchair before the fire in his office, a silk handkerchief over his face and the "Times" spread open on his knees. A generation earlier he had been a middle-aged clerk in the old Lincoln's Inn chambers, and Sir Aylmer had sentimentally sought him out and offered him easy work and a comfortable home for his last years. All day long he sat in his office with a fire blazing and every window shut, copying and filing letters, posting his books and intermittently attending to the telephone switch-board. Meticulously methodical and entirely faithful, he was already an old servant, growing gradually feebler in company with his master and Benson, the male nurse, Arkwright, the butler, all "the pack of old men," as Hatherly, himself no longer young, described them.

"Frightfully sorry to disturb you," Deryk apologised, as the old man woke with a start and snatched the handkerchief from his face, protesting that he had not been asleep. "I saw Miss Penrose this morning, and she hasn't had her card for the ball. Will you write her another and get one of the men to take it round?"

The secretary blinked for a moment; then, rising stiffly, he unlocked a drawer of his desk and brought out two foolscap sheets of typewritten names, while Deryk fidgeted with impatience.

"I don't call to mind sending her one, Master Deryk," he murmured, adjusting his horn-rimmed glasses and pointing his way down the page with a knobbly forefinger. "Now, I wonder how that was?" He concluded his scrutiny and looked up with a shake of the head. "No, sir. It's not down."

"What list is this?" Deryk asked, holding out his hand for the papers.

"Your father's, Master Deryk. I took him in the list from the last dance, and he worked on that. He must have missed. . . . But I'll write a card and send it round this very minute."

He bustled to his desk and methodically arranged before him a new pen, an inkstand, blotting-paper and a card. Deryk started for the door and then turned back.

"Oh, you might ring up Arkwright and tell him there'll be one extra for dinner. If you'll give me the plan of the table, I'll shew where she's to go."

"I left the plan with Sir Aylmer this morning," said the secretary.

Deryk hurried out, looking at his watch to see if there was time to capture the plan before his father began the afternoon rest. It was after the prescribed hour of three, but he decided to risk it and made his way quietly into the study after an inaudible knock at the door. Sir Aylmer was lying on his sofa, covered by a rug, while Hatherly walked about, pulling down the blinds and setting a screen before the fire.

"Is the plan of the table for to-night here, dad?" Deryk asked. "You forgot to send Dina Penrose a card, but I saw her this morning and told her to roll along. I want to shew Arkwright where to put her."

Sir Aylmer opened his eyes and looked long and expressionlessly at his son; then his brows met in a familiar grey bar.

"You must really not take these things into your own hands without consulting me," he said.

"But—you surely meant her to come?" Deryk interrupted in astonishment. "She always *has*."

"We've got as many as the tables will hold—" his father hesitated; Deryk was evidently unconvinced by the excuse, but the momentary hesitation was in itself so much an answer that he decided to go on where he had begun. "I don't know that you quite realise her position, Deryk," he explained slowly. "Since her father died——"

"She's had to earn her own living," Deryk interrupted again. "I know all that, but it doesn't make any difference."

Sir Aylmer's fingers drummed on the table by his side.

"Not socially, but in other ways. When she had to face the changed conditions——"

Deryk's gesture of impatience cut short his father's elaborate explanation.

"I absolutely disagree!" he exclaimed; and, less respectfully, "I think it's utter rot! But that's neither here nor there, because I've invited her, and Phillimore's sending her a card."

The announcement was thrown out as a challenge, and Sir Aylmer seemed to pick it up and stare at it long and curiously before deciding that it was worth accepting.

"You will kindly countermand your instructions to Phillimore," he said at length.

Deryk could feel himself trembling from his hips to his ankles, as he used to do when waiting to be thrashed at school. He shook his head obstinately, however.

"No go. I told you I'd invited her verbally as well."

"Then you will kindly countermand the invitation." He turned to Hatherly, who was conscientiously inspecting the titles of the books in the revolving case. "Turn out the light, will you, Ted?" he begged. "It's long after my time."

Hatherly made a movement towards the switch, nodding significantly to Deryk. In another moment the room was in darkness; and Deryk, standing halfway into the passage, was left with a feeling of stampede and defeat. A sudden boyish anger possessed him, and he pushed his way back past Hatherly into the room.

"I'll tell you one thing, dad!" he said very deliberately. "If Dina doesn't come to-night, I don't either. I mean that!"

Hatherly caught him by the shoulders and hustled him into the passage.

"You're making an exhibition of yourself," he whispered with unusual warmth.

Deryk marched away to the library. That was like Hats! To sit on the fence until he saw who was winning; then to jump down and kick a fellow in the stomach. Two to one, as usual; but it so happened that one could beat two or ten or twenty over this business. Of course, if anybody chose to get a hired bravo like Benson to dress him by main force and strap him into his chair with a gag in his mouth . . .

The library door shivered, as he slammed it behind him.

3

Deryk was ostentatiously absent before tea, during tea and until half an hour before it was time to dress for dinner. On Sir Aylmer's behalf and at his instigation, Hatherly started on a room-to-room quest and discovered him at length in the library, pasting in book plates and entering the new arrivals in a card-catalogue by the fireplace. The door was locked and took so much time to open that Hatherly's tone, when once he got inside, was studiedly propitiatory.

"I just came to see where you'd got to," he explained. "Arden's looking for people to play pool."

"Arden can go on looking for people to play pool," Deryk rejoined, as he began to mount a pair of library steps. "And you didn't come here to see where I'd got to."

Hatherly wheeled an armchair to the side of the fire opposite Deryk and lit a cigar, saying nothing and letting his eyes wander round the room. For a time Deryk affected to ignore his presence, but after an interval he remarked,

"*I* didn't invite him here."

"Didn't invite who?"

"Arden. The guv'nor invites all this crowd and he can jolly well keep them amused. If I'm to be treated as if I were a child; if I mayn't do anything without consulting him beforehand, I won't. And that's that."

Hatherly removed the cigar from his mouth and blew a cloud of smoke. The round, red face ceased to smile, and the eyes to twinkle; he was become like Mr. Pickwick reproving Alfred Jingle, but a little more worldlily bored, a little less righteously indignant.

"You're behaving like a child, Deryk," he said dispassionately. "You're not at your best, when you're on your dignity, or when you're being rude to your father; and, if you want to be treated as befits your age, you should behave accordingly. I don't know how much you want to go to Asia Minor with Manisty, but I can tell you that you're not starting the right way about it: you've got to keep the sunny side of your father; he's got the whip-hand."

Deryk fitted the last card into its place and slammed the drawer home. He was not quite certain whether to maintain his attitude of injured, vengeful isolation or to shew these old men that they could not always have their own way.

"Well, he's not got the whip-hand to-night," he said at length, when he had made his decision.

Hatherly watched him without comment, as he set a ladder against the wall and mounted with an armful of books; without comment he smoked his cigar halfway through and carried the remainder across the hall. The study was still in darkness, as he had left it, but a voice bade him come in and turn on the light.

"Did you manage to get any sleep?" he enquired. Sir Aylmer shook his head. "I'm not disturbing you, then. Aylmer, you sometimes pay me the compliment of asking my advice, and I know Deryk tolerably well; you'll be wise not to press your point about to-night. I know nothing of the merits of the case——"

Sir Aylmer raised himself on the sofa with one of the startling exhibitions of vigour which belied his habitual helplessness—and for which he had usually to pay with interest.

"The merits of the case," he interrupted, "are that Deryk must learn to do what he's told."

Hatherly nodded, keeping his time as slow as his companion's.

"Well, he won't to-night," he prophesied. "I know him better than you do, when he's in an obstinate mood. And, what's more, you can't make him. And, what's more again, if you try and he sulks, he'll let everybody know that he wouldn't come to his own ball, because you forbade the house to a certain girl, whom he will mention by name. Everyone will then put his own construction on the story, and you may all of you find that your hands have been forced." He paused to give time for the advice to sink in. No one else ever ventured to lecture Sir Aylmer as he occasionally did, but he always spoke with trepidation, never quite sure whether he was more afraid of rousing his friend or being snubbed himself. "What's the matter with the girl?" he went on carelessly. "I only ask out of curiosity."

Sir Aylmer was silent long enough to shew that he did not intend to be roused.

"There's nothing the matter," he said abruptly. "You used to see her about here, when Penrose was alive. They've been very intimate since they were children, but they're growing up now, and I don't choose to encourage the intimacy. I've no preconceptions about Deryk, I propose to leave him complete liberty of action, but he must have time to—well, to look round."

For a moment Hatherly debated the wisdom of enquiring what kind of free action Sir Aylmer proposed to allow Deryk and when it was to begin. Few men talked more of freedom and conceded it less—or conceded it more irrationally and erratically. Deryk was allowed to read what he liked, travel where he chose, determine—in theory—his own career; but, when he wanted money, he was given a cheque for a hundred pounds, and at home his father almost shadowed him to see that he was behaving with conventional propriety. There was no immediate object, however, in enlarging the issue, and Hatherly buried himself in a book until it was time to dress for dinner. Sir Aylmer brooded silently, slowly and seriously as if he were buying a fleet of steamships or selling a railroad; in time he came to see that an invitation once given, verbally or in writing, could not be cancelled as a disciplinary measure directed against a third party; and after that he recognised quickly and almost without resentment that Deryk had won. He lacked the imagination, however, to make his surrender graceful, so that Deryk, dressed for once in good time, waited by his chair in the hall with a set, white face and sunken, dark eyes, nervously obstinate to the last. He was resolved, if necessary, to keep dinner back until nine and, whatever happened, to enter the dining-room with Idina or not at all. A place had been laid for her in accordance with his instructions to Arkwright; what his father's instructions might have been in the interval, he had no means of guessing.

Punctually at half-past eight the question was decided. The Grange car drew up at the door, and a thin, middle-aged man, recognised as Sidney Dawson by his exaggerated shoulders and waist, helped Idina to get out and trotted boyishly up the steps at her side. Bending almost imperceptibly forward, Sir Aylmer greeted her with the same stereotyped welcome that he had offered to his other guests, and Deryk went in to dinner with mixed feelings of relief and embarrassment and, stronger than either, a sense of misunderstanding; Sir Aylmer was always so scrupulously correct that, if the pearl necklace were an error of taste, if Idina were by the remotest possibility to be placed in a false position either by coming to the ball or by accepting that wretched necklace, there would in ordinary circumstances be nothing more to be said save that scrupulosity sometimes ran riot. But Deryk had a disquieting conviction that he was not being told the whole truth. Two days earlier he had asked whether Idina Penrose was dining on the first night of the house-party; Sir Aylmer had deliberately let slip an opportunity of explanation and had merely answered that no one was being invited from outside. And again, without warning, he had been left to discover fortuitously that she had not been sent a card for the ball. For the first time in his life Deryk seemed to find a want of frankness in his father. . . . Looking down the table to Idina's place, he could not understand his father's sudden aversion toward a girl with whom he had been deliberately brought up. . . . He could not understand, either, what amusement she could get from talking to an old bore like Sidney Dawson, whose conversation consisted of endless personal anecdotes about the reckless life which he and his friends had led in the forgotten bars, the derelict saloons and dead night-clubs of London in the eighties. Of course, she had to be decently civil to her employer's brother. . . . And he had given her a lift in his car. But it was an infernal shame that she should be in bondage to Miss Dawson, that she should pretty well *have* to accept his damned officious lift. . . . It must be the most awful rough luck on a girl to be suddenly hard up, with no one to help her. At least the people who *could* help her took darned good care not to—not to help her properly, that is (his own father had been perfectly incomprehensible—an utter brute with his nonsense about working out your own salvation), to buy her clothes and jewels, to seat her cross-legged, as it were, on a magic carpet and whirl her away to London and all the best and most expensive shops; a hat here, furs there (with her colouring she would look adorable in ermine), jewellery . . . his racing imagination was temporarily checked by the recollection of the pearl necklace; then, tossing the unwelcome obstacle aside, it sped forward again. It would be such fun to watch her lips parting, to see the dark blue eyes lighting up! With an income of two pounds a minute (it was really more), you could go on doing this all day long for any girl, whether—you—really—technically—cared for her—or not. Some day the money would be his. . . .

He was embarrassed and at the same time curiously relieved to find Lady Sally Farwell indefatigably at an advanced stage of an Odyssean story.

". . . So we went straight back to Buda Pesth. Have you ever been there, Mr. Lancing?"

"Oh, by Jove!" ejaculated Deryk with specious interest.

"Have you ever been there?" she repeated.

"No; that is, yes, of course," he answered in some confusion.

As soon as dinner was over, Sir Aylmer returned to his former commanding position in the hall and claimed Deryk to stand at his side and help receive the guests for the ball. Until nearly eleven he stood automatically smiling and shaking hands, then conscientiously solicited and received dances from the half-dozen girls that he imagined his father would least like him to offend. God! the English were supposed to take their pleasures sadly, but what could you do? *Prima facie* a ball was designed to provide *enjoyment* for *young* people; well, it couldn't amuse anyone to give or receive a duty dance; as for the young people, half the guests were unknown to him, the other half seemed to be about ninety. Really, what was the use of inviting old Marsham, the vicar, unless he were going to chirp to dowagers? Or Forsyte, who, by the way, should learn not to come up on an unprofessional occasion and tell a fellow that he was looking fine-drawn; who *wouldn't* be fine-drawn at Ripley Court? The pathetic little dolls of creatures all affected a polite interest in his travels, and by midnight, when he rid himself of the last with a hurried "'Nother one later, may I?" he felt that nothing but the prospect of supper with Idina kept him from screaming aloud. . . . As he scoured the neighbourhood of the ballroom in search of her, he found Yolande Stornaway sitting alone in the gallery with her boyish auburn head resting on her arms, gazing down on to the serpentine coils of the dancers.

"Lost a valuable partner, Yolande?" he enquired. "I don't know a tithe of the people here, but I'll look for him, if you like. Oh, it's no good, the music's stopping."

She shook her head.

"I'm resting this one," she told him. "Tell me, Deryk, is your father going to let you go with Dr. Manisty?"

Deryk sat down beside her and took out his cigarette case.

"He hasn't decided yet," he answered. "There seems to be some portentous business about getting to understand the family affairs, my position here—" He blew a scornful puff of smoke. "In other words, fooling about here at this sort of thing all my days."

Yolande half turned her head to him.

"And are you going to stand that?" she asked provocatively.

Deryk shrugged his shoulders.

"If he puts his foot down, I shall have to. The purse-strings, my dear Yolande."

She tossed her head contemptuously.

"If you were worth a snap of the fingers, you'd simply refuse; it's a question of pride; and, if he wouldn't give in, you'd go out and earn your own living. With your brains you could do it as easily as anything. Deryk, you simply couldn't live here doing *nothing.*"

He shrugged his shoulders again and pointed down to the ballroom.

"About half the fellows down there are really doing nothing. Deganway's in the Foreign Office, Oakleigh spends his leisure moments running a paper, but most of them are sort of killing time till their fathers die. And then I suppose they sit tight as the complete country gentleman until *their* sons grow up and wait for them to clear out. This is a remarkable country, Yolande."

"To an American."

Deryk turned on her questioningly.

"I'm not an American," he said. "I was born there, but that doesn't make me an American."

Yolande laughed gently to herself.

"Perhaps it keeps you from becoming anything else. Deryk, I'm going to be frightfully rude. May I?"

He sighed resignedly and looked away crestfallen, like a child under rebuke.

"Do you need leave after all these years?" he enquired.

His forlorn expression and tone aroused Yolande's quick compassion.

"You're different from all the people down there, dear Deryk," she explained; "your life's bound to be different. They were born to it, and—well, you know, you weren't."

There was a long silence, in which he gazed dreamily down.

"I think I realise that," he said at length.

"Your father hasn't," Yolande rejoined. "He doesn't *belong* to the place, and the place doesn't belong to him. . . . I suppose it takes generations to get your roots right down into the soil. And, if he's ever had the instinct, America would have knocked it out of him. A year on my own in London has killed centuries of cherished ideas." She turned with a friendly smile. "I'm very fond of you, Deryk; you can do such lots of things, and I shall never forgive you, if you waste your life trying to do something that was never worth doing at any time and that you couldn't do, if it were."

He rose to his feet with a laugh, as the band began to tune up for the next waltz.

"I *am* doing my best," he protested. "But if my father——"

"Oh, why aren't you a bit more of a rebel?" she exclaimed. "Everybody has a father, and every father's naturally an obscurantist. D'you suppose I didn't have to make a fight for it?"

"You told me you had three hundred a year. You appreciate I haven't a bob of my own?"

Yolande sighed and pushed back her chair.

"As if you couldn't make it over and over again! My child, I should like to see you getting frightfully into debt or marrying someone your father disapproved of. That would make you shew your mettle! But I expect you'd sigh as a lover and obey as a son, like Gibbon. You're hopeless, Deryk; you've got no backbone."

"I'm keeping my partner waiting," he said, bowing and turning to go.

Idina was sitting in the hall with Sidney Dawson, who seemed to be maintaining a monologue of sparkling anecdotes. As a young man he had wasted a few years and a portion of his health on strictly conventional dissipation; when his friends married, he kept alive in memory the glories of their saturnalia and boasted that he was too old a bird to be caught in the trap of matrimony. Young members of the County Club were flooded with accounts of his former dare-deviltry, but, after a short renown for a certain enviable worldliness, the young men seemed to tire of him; they had letters to write, when he pulled up a chair next to theirs; and, if they could not always refuse his invitations, at least they never invited him back. Dawson discovered that he was growing middle-aged. True to pose, he interested himself in the health that he had so gloriously squandered, and a pleasurable flicker of old fires shone out when he was able to confide to strangers at Homburg, Marienbad or Harrogate, "My own fault, you know, but I don't regret it. You can't put old heads on young shoulders, and I had a good run for my money. . . ." For the rest he was to be found at the age of five and forty in the smoking-room of the County Club, ineffectual, idle and bored, seeking any kind of companionship and finding it rarer and harder to achieve, or paying quarrelsome visits to Aston Ripley, where his invalid sister ruled the Grange in his absence and visibly resented his intrusion. Since Idina's arrival, indeed, he spent less time in London. She was an attractive new audience, and, though his sister interfered spitefully with all gallantry of manner within the house, he discovered agreeable variety and interest in smartening his appearance, trying the old conversational gambits and playing the decorous cavalier to the girl between Ivy Cottage and the Grange.

"Well, I mustn't be greedy," he said regretfully at the end of his story, when he saw Deryk fidgeting in front of them. "Perhaps later on? . . . And you'll let me know as soon as you want the car, Miss Penrose? My time is entirely at your disposal. Thank you very much, I'm sure."

Deryk hurried her away for one turn round the ballroom before supper. As they came back into the hall, he met his father with a majestic lady and her daughter on either side of his chair.

"Oh, I should like to introduce my son, Lady Dainton," said Sir Aylmer, laying an arresting hand on Deryk's arm. "Miss Dainton, my son. Lady Dainton's car unfortunately broke down by Bishop's Cross, and she has only just arrived."

Deryk bowed and murmured some words of stereotyped regret. He was *not* going to have his evening spoiled with any more duty dances.

"We were just going in to supper," he told the girl. "May I have one later? Say, missing two?"

They reached the gun-room without further hindrance, and with a sigh of satisfaction he locked the door and poured out two glasses of champagne. Idina tried to check him, but he waved away her interference.

"I know you don't take it, but it'll do us both good to-night. I've had a perfectly damnable evening." He drained the glass and filled another. "Are you enjoying yourself, Dina?" She nodded, bright-eyed, over the rim of the glass. "Well, that's one good thing. I can imagine less dreary recreations than listening to Dawson's conversation, but there's no accounting for tastes. Look here, as I told you this morning, I'm not going to let you stay on at the Grange. That's understood, isn't it?"

The girl shook her head and silently accepted the food, which he placed before her. She was not in love with her work, but, on her father's death, his rare friends—a dozen half-pay majors with troubles of their own—had proffered so guarded a sympathy, and her two thousand pounds threatened to dwindle and disappear so quickly that she had applied to a Regent Street agency for employment on her own account. The agency, warning her that latter-day governesses were expected to have passed examinations and to hold certificates, sent her to a house where she had spiritual and physical custody of two ill-bred small boys from the moment when she washed and dressed them in the morning, through long hours of lessons and exercise, till the time when she washed and put them to bed at night. She was rescued from this by a carelessly good-natured woman, who met her in Hyde Park, looked approvingly at her neat figure and pretty face and set her, in a rustling silk dress, to sell hats at an exorbitantly expensive shop in Albemarle Street. For a time she did well, but one day a very thin, bored young man, with an old face and watchful eyes, sat in the background with his chin on the gold nob of his cane, following and devouring Idina with his eyes, while his wife grimaced at herself under successive unsuitable hats. On the morrow she was told by telephone that the hat finally chosen required alteration; could she call to take instructions? The thin young man collided with her in the hall at Bruton Street, as she left, and apologised at unnecessary length. A week later, meeting her as she left the shop for luncheon, he told her that all was now satisfactory and suggested that they should lunch together. Idina refused, so the thin young man made a practice of waiting for her as she came out of the shop and walking home with her to her lodgings. When she complained to the carelessly good-natured woman, she was told not to be a little prude. After that Idina returned to the agency, and was sent on trial as secretary to a member of parliament. At the end of a week she was told that it was impracticable for anyone unable to write shorthand to get through the day's work.

Sir Aylmer Lancing had at the outset promised to pay the expense of her brother's education and leave them the use of Ivy Cottage, if she could find any suitable employment for herself. (But she must recognise that she had to work out her own salvation.) She was reluctant to trespass on his good nature, but the agency greeted her return with impatience, and her pride had lost something of its bloom in the past eight months. She wrote frankly, with the feeling that her father's millionaire friend might have done more and talked less about working out salvations, and after a disheartening delay was told that Miss Dawson, with whom she was already acquainted, would give her a trial as companion.

Some part of this history Idina unfolded to Deryk, as they sat at supper.

"Well, it's got to stop," was all that he would say, waving away her protests and pouring her out another glass of champagne.

"But, Deryk——"

Far down the passage he heard a voice calling: it drew nearer, and he caught the sound of his own name; nearer still, and he recognised the voice as his father's. Springing to the door, he unlocked it and, jumping on to the table, removed the bulbs from the electric light. Then he turned up the switch and dragged Idina on to a sofa behind the door.

The voice came ever nearer, to be followed by the tread of slow footsteps, as Sir Aylmer rose from his chair and impatiently turned the handle. The door opened for a moment and closed again.

"Just as well I wasn't smoking," Deryk observed in a whisper.

"But oughtn't you to go?" Idina urged.

"Not if I know it. It's probably only the Dainton girl, wondering what's become of me."

"But, Deryk, it's awfully rude——" she began.

He put his hand quietly over her lips, as she had done to him in the morning.

"My darling Dina, Miss Dainton can have six partners for every dance, if she likes; she knows everybody and she's very good-looking, and for the last three years people have been falling over each other to marry her. She can spare me. This is almost the first time I've seen you since I came back—if I take away my hand, will you promise to be sensible?"

She nodded, with a laugh.

"Turn on the lights again, Deryk," she begged.

"Don't you like it like this?"

"It'd look so funny, if anyone came in."

He jumped up and turned the key again in the door. "Nobody can come in now," he said. "And there's the most gorgeous moonlight. Dina, dear, you do look sweet to-night!"

She smiled without speaking and allowed him to take her hand in his own. His lean face had softened into a smile, and in the moonlight his eyes were liquid and dark.

"I'm so glad you've come back," she whispered.

"I'm probably going away again quite soon."

"Oh, Deryk, where?"

"Asia Minor. It's a digging-party with Dr. Manisty."

For several moments neither spoke; then Idina said in a level voice,

"I expect you'll enjoy that."

"I shouldn't go otherwise," he answered easily. There was another pause, and he became conscious that the conversation was flagging. "I hope you'll have the decency to write to me this time," he said with mock severity.

The girl turned and laid her disengaged hand on his shoulder.

"I wish you weren't going away so soon," she whispered with trembling lips.

"But you don't want me to stay in this graveyard?"

She nodded and turned quickly away so that the moonlight, shining on her face, should not shew him that her eyes were full of tears. Sliding one arm round her shoulders, Deryk drew her to him and kissed her on the lips. In all the years of their friendship they had never had occasion to kiss; instinctively she drew back, but he threw his other arm round her neck and bent forward, kissing her again. The resistance grew fainter, her eyelids drooped and closed, and he pressed her to him until her quickened breathing warmed his cheek, and he could feel the beating of her heart.

"Do you want me to stay, darling?" he whispered.

She sought his ear with her lips and murmured drowsily, "Yes."

At the far end of the great house the ceaseless "*tum*-tum-tum, *tum*-tum-tum" of the piano could still be heard; the other instruments, the melody of the waltz itself, were lost. From time to time a door slammed, there was a whirr of an engine and the crackle of heavy tires on the gravel of the drive. Once Idina asked whether they ought not to be going back.

"Do you want to go?" Deryk whispered.

Her arms tightened round him.

"But your father?" she began.

"He's gone to bed hours ago," was the answer.

Half-asleep and with eyes closed they sat without speaking again until Hatherly's voice at the end of the passage called "Deryk." The call was not repeated, but Deryk loosened one arm to look at his watch.

"My hat, it's half-past three!" he exclaimed.

Idina jumped to her feet with a cry of dismay. Her dress had slipped half off her shoulders, and she pulled it into place with one hand, while the other strove to arrange her dishevelled hair.

"Mr. Dawson's waiting to take me home!" she said.

"And I ought to have been saying good-bye to all these people," said Deryk, as he settled his tie and picked up his gloves.

They hurried into the hall, rather consciously avoiding each other's eyes. The first person whom they saw was Sir Aylmer, seated in his wheeled chair, grey of face and desperately tired, bidding farewell to the last of his guests. Sidney Dawson, in fur coat and muffler, was drinking soup and smoking a cigar with Hatherly; Summertown, flushed and rather noisy, was collecting Deganway and Sam Dainton for a last raid on the supper-room.

"At *last!*" Yolande Stornaway murmured to Manisty, as the truants came in sight. "Just about three hours."

"D-does one cheer or make a speech or wha-what?" enquired Manisty. "I'm not a f-family man, you know."

"You can safely leave all that to Sir Aylmer," Yolande answered. "But she's a dear little thing."

Deryk advanced with exaggerated ease into the middle of the hall.

"We've been having supper," he announced. "I'd no idea it was so late."

4

Deryk was too much excited to sleep for the short remainder of the night and appeared in the middle of the morning with dark rings round very bright eyes. As he turned from side to side, trying to clear his head of one over-insistent waltz, he had prepared a number of eloquently defiant speeches for use with his father, when required to explain his behaviour overnight. He was eager to fling them off, while the touch of Idina's lips was still warm on his cheek and his arms seemed to draw her yielding body to him, so that his tightly-strung valour became slack, when Hatherly reported at breakfast that Sir Aylmer was seriously overtired and would spend the day in his room without seeing anyone.

Twenty-four hours' uncertainty was bad enough, but it was made worse by the knowledge that everybody in the house and a sprinkling of people in the neighbourhood were comparing suspicions, gossiping and exchanging questions every moment that he was out of earshot. Hatherly talked at breakfast with a Rhadamanthine face; George Oakleigh, on entering the dining-room, smiled at him a little wistfully and said nothing; Summertown, meeting him in the hall, punched him in the ribs and addressed him as an "old dog," while Deganway, who prided himself on the range and accuracy of his personal knowledge, spared no one in his efforts to find out precisely and exhaustively who this Miss Penrose was. No one congratulated him in terms except Yolande, who ran up, as he was convoying a party to the training-stable on the Downs, and poured out a stream of whispered questions.

"Most interesting! First *I've* heard about it," he answered, as he tried to break away.

"Don't be silly!" she exclaimed. "Does Sir Aylmer approve?"

"There's nothing to approve of."

Yolande laughed.

"That may be truer than you care," she warned him. "I hope, in spite of what I said last night, that he won't stand in the way."

"What of?"

Yolande turned and gripped him by both arms.

"I shall shake you in a minute, Deryk!" she cried. "You know I'm a jolly good friend to you, you know I want you and her to be happy——"

"But do you imagine we're engaged?" he interrupted.

Yolande looked at him with wide-open grey eyes.

"Well, aren't you?" she asked.

"I repeat, it's the first *I've* heard about it," he told her again, and she dropped away from his side with a chastened sense that he did not want her sympathy or good wishes—

also that he was behaving oafishly over the whole business. . . .

During the afternoon he made a second attempt to see his father, but Benson would not allow him inside the room, and he could only give himself the barren satisfaction of constructing imaginative and unexpectedly heroic versions of the impending interview. Forty-eight hours before it was a simple matter of saying casually, "Oh, by the way, Dina and I are engaged, dad! Hope you approve!" He might be entirely wrong, of course, but he felt now that his father would *not* approve and, what was worse, that he might not state his objections frankly. The episode of the invitation—Deryk shivered disgustedly; it left an unpleasant taste in the mouth; and the whole objection seemed to arise from a new and amazing quality of snobbishness. Well, he was *damned* if he was going to be told that Dina wasn't good enough for him; he would not introduce her name or allow her to be discussed. Of course, he could not marry without money, and, if his father persisted in his opposition, money would not be forthcoming. Obviously the question of an independent income had to be settled once and for all; and thereafter, if his father proved obdurate, had he the means of making himself independent of his father? Yolande thought so, but how long would it take and how the deuce was one to begin? He could only find out by trying. . . . And the immediate problem was what line to take when required to explain his three hours' absence overnight, his general neglect of duty towards his other guests?

The imaginary interview was cut short by George Oakleigh, who strolled languidly into the room, helped himself to a cigarette and sat down on the corner of the billiard-table by Deryk's sofa with the announcement that he had come to talk journalism and propaganda.

"I hope you weren't asleep," he began. "Miss Stornaway told me yesterday that you were probably going to Asia Minor with Manisty. Is it true? My reason for asking is that everybody seems to expect a third Balkan war as soon as Turkey has got the ships we're building for her—Turkey and Bulgaria against the rest, you know—and I want all the independent information I can get for my paper. I don't know whether you'd care to do a series or articles for me; if you go there with good introductions, you might be able to get me a lot of good stuff, and I'm quite sure that we aren't in sight of the end of trouble there. I can introduce you to our Ministers in Athens and Sofia. The Ambassador at Constantinople I don't know, but my friend O'Rane can manage that. I'm afraid that our rate for contributions won't be much of an inducement to *you*, I don't know whether you feel equal to undertaking the job——"

"If I go, I'll send anything I get," Deryk promised.

"Have you done anything of the kind before?"

"No, but I could pick it up, of course," Deryk answered.

Oakleigh smiled a little ruefully.

"Journalism isn't as easy or interesting or picturesque as you might think from the novels written about it," he said.

"But any man of decent education can make a living out of it, surely," Deryk persisted, "even if he's had no previous experience?"

Oakleigh gave no categorical reply, but for half an hour he talked of men and methods, journalistic giants and journalistic triumphs; a corner of the veil was lifted from eternally fascinating, ever active Fleet Street; he told of the proud ships that had swaggered from port, never to return, and of the labouring tramps that had ploughed their way to and fro with riches greater and ever greater for their owners; of the men who had come to educate the press and the men whom the press had educated.

"Good journalism has an excellence of its own," he concluded, "which is not to be won in a night by your most brilliant thinker or writer. Frankly I should probably have to cut your effusions to pieces till you'd gone through the mill."

Deryk's academic contempt for the slipshod violence of

Fleet Street was not mitigated by Oakleigh's temperate exposition of qualities and difficulties.

"What d'you bet I couldn't make a living by my pen within one month?" he asked.

"Come and try," Oakleigh suggested. "The experience won't do you any harm. I'll start you right at the bottom, and you can see how high you'll rise. I don't think you'll do much—quite candidly. There'll be too much gutter 'cuteness, too many superlatives, altogether too much racket and hysteria. God! how I hated it, when I came to it first! When I wrote leaders like the old weekly essays for my tutor!"

Hardly knowing whence or where the idea had come to him, Deryk had allowed his thoughts to wander far beyond the narrow range of their conversation.

"You'll pay me, of course?" he stipulated. "I'm taking this seriously."

"Pay you and sack you, if you're incompetent," Oakleigh returned in the same tone.

"That's a bargain," said Deryk, and they wandered out of the billiard-room in search of the others.

Deryk sat down to dinner that night in high spirits. Adventure, self-realisation and achievement lay within his grasp. When the cigars were brought in, he moved round to Hatherly's side and asked whether it would be possible to see his father that night. Hatherly's round, kindly face clouded, and he shook his head with the *sub judice,* Rhadamanthine air of the morning; for the first time Deryk felt an unkind impatience of his father's unaccommodating ill-health, and he found difficulty in curbing his irritability, when Yolande came up to him in the drawing-room and asked the result of his interview.

"Oh, you were so bubbling over at dinner that I thought you must have talked him round," she said with disappointment.

"You think he'll need talking round?" asked Deryk.

Yolande shrugged her shoulders.

"He's your father, you know him best. But it doesn't make any difference one way or the other. Deryk dear, let me say one thing, and then I'll hereafter hold my peace. If you're in love with her, it doesn't matter *what* Sir Aylmer does; because, if you've the pride of a snail, you'll snap your fingers at him and go your own way. It's a question of *pride,* as I told you before."

Deryk smiled at her flushed face and eager manner.

"You're qualifying for a matrimonial agent," he said.

"You great gaby!" Her grey eyes suddenly softened. "Don't you understand that I want to see you happy, Deryk? I'm very fond of you and I've always felt that it would be next to impossible for any boy with all your money to know the least happiness in life. Do say you've got the pride of a snail!"

"I hope I have," he laughed; and they parted, as Summertown approached to claim a victim for his bridge table.

All but Deryk were tired early that night, and the party broke up at eleven. The fever that had been in his blood all day was not yet spent, however, and he paced up and down the library after the others had gone to bed, restlessly unable to still his nerves.

Since four that morning he had not seen Idina and he hungered for the sound of her voice. He could not tire himself by cutting the leaves of new books or finding places for them on the crowded shelves; as he sat restlessly by the fire, as he slowly mounted the library ladder, his thoughts raced back to the moment when he saw her face, white in the moonlight and with lids drowsily lowered over dark blue eyes, drawing nearer to him until their lips met; he could feel his cheeks tingling at the memory of her head pressing on his shoulder and her cool, white arms clasping round his neck. It was incomprehensible that he should want anything, anyone so much as he wanted her. . . . Throwing down the books, he paced the library again and again; hardly knowing what he did, he flung open one of the long windows and climbed out, but the clatter of his feet on the gravel frightened him; in the distance he could hear the night watchman talking to a gardener who had been stoking the hot-house furnaces; in the stable-yard a dog yawned, bayed half-heartedly at the moon and yawned again.

Climbing back, he closed the window, turned out the light and walked on tiptoe to the secretary's office. There was a sound, half moan, half snore, as he passed his father's bedroom; but it was not repeated, and, after a moment's pause, he crept on. Within the office the door between bedroom and sitting-room was open; he stood with his fingers on the handle until Phillimore's heavy breathing, temporarily syncopated, had recovered its regularity and repose, then guided himself by the dying firelight to the telephone switchboard. The little holes, the rubber tubes ending in plugs perplexed him; but in time he found his own extension and connected it with the outgoing line. Then, noiselessly closing the door, he tiptoed down the passage and hurried upstairs to his own room.

For many moments after his call he could get no answer. Then a startled voice said, "Yes? Hullo? Yes?"

Deryk laughed softly and lowered his voice to a whisper.

"Darling! I only rang up to say good-night."

Over the wire he fancied a catch in the voice and heard a little sigh of relief.

"Oh, Deryk! I couldn't think who it was!"

"I wanted to know how you were and what you were doing. Were you asleep?"

"I was in bed, but I wasn't asleep. Can't you sleep, either?"

"No. I ought to be tired out, but I can't settle down till you say good-night. Say 'good-night' to me, Dina."

"Good-night."

He waited and then broke out in disgust.

"*That's* not the way to say good-night!"

"Good-night,—Deryk."

"No good."

"Good-night—dear."

Sitting half-undressed on the edge of his bed, Deryk found his feet swinging backwards and forwards with irritable impatience.

"I shall ring off, if you go on like this," he threatened.

The voice sank to a whisper of welling tenderness.

"Don't bully me, sweetheart. Good-night, my darling, darling boy."

There was a distant click, and the wire became dead. Deryk smiled and finished his undressing.

The following day the house-party began to disperse. Manisty was the first to go, and he spent a large part of the morning with his host and Raymond Stornaway, discussing the details of the help which he required in his work. Sir Aylmer, as ever, put a number of slow questions and then sat silent: after due reflection he stated the terms of what he was prepared to do and sat back with closed eyes to signify that nothing more remained to be said; his mind was wiped clean as a slate from the moment that his draft scheme was put in black and white. After hearing Manisty at length and patiently, he had offered to endow a chair of archæology to be administered by trustees, but with the first appointment left in his own hands. Manisty, like every other applicant for funds, began to stammer a comment, but Raymond silenced him and accepted the proposal on behalf of both. As the door closed behind them, Sir Aylmer rang his table-bell and sent for his son. Deryk came in with a quickly beating heart and a sense that his nervous valour of yesterday was none the better for keeping. He hated these wrangles with his father, but on certain points there was no room for yielding or compromise. He was five and twenty, as well entitled as anyone of the same age to fashion his own life: wherein was six and twenty, eight and twenty, thirty a mysteriously more responsible time of life?

Sir Aylmer was at his table with a foolscap sheet of scribbled figures and notes before him. He continued writing for some moments, while Deryk stood with his back to the fire, keeping his courage up to fighting point. The opening of the interview reminded him of similar meetings at school, when his tutor invariably ignored the presence of a malefactor and went on with his correspondence until an advantageous atmosphere of suspense had been created.

"You said the other day that you wanted to go out with Manisty on his next trip to Hellenopolis," began Sir Aylmer. "You haven't been home very long, and it's not very convenient for me, but you seemed anxious to go. You're still of the same mind?"

Deryk considered quickly. Excavation, Manisty and Asia Minor had ebbed out of his mind from the moment when he mentioned Hellenopolis to Idina in the gun-room. His father's opening found him unprepared; he felt that it was not quite fair.

"You're still of the same mind?" Sir Aylmer repeated, looking up at him for the first time.

Over-riding every other thought, Deryk recognised that he must at least know his own mind.

"Yes," he answered without further hesitation.

Sir Aylmer nodded.

"Ive been talking to Manisty this morning, and he said he's willing to take you. He starts in a month's time, as soon as his lectures at Liverpool are finished, and he'll be away till the early autumn. When you come back, I shall have to keep you very hard at work on family business. Hatherly will take you over to New York in the autumn; while you're down here, he and I will explain the business from this end. If you can find Hatherly, kindly tell him that I want to see him."

Deryk stood breathless as though his father had hit him in the wind. His life was neatly mapped out for a twelvemonth: by design or coincidence he was throughout that time to be kept under observation and away from Ivy Cottage. Of his eloquent defiance he had not found the opportunity to speak one word; of the heroic schemes and scenes imagined in the last thirty-six hours he was not to have the occasion of putting one into execution. Accepting battle on his adversary's ground, Sir Aylmer had quietly cut it from under his feet. And this was the man whom he had so triumphantly vanquished in the contest over Idina's invitation; the man whom he was to defy and overwhelm in the greater contest over his future liberty of action; he was being packed out of the country—at his own premature request.

"Hats is in his own room," said Deryk. Refusing to capitulate and to be ordered here and there without the semblance of opposition, he picked up the telephone from his father's table. "Mr. Hatherly, please. Hullo! that you, Hats? I say, can you come and see the guv'nor?"

Sir Aylmer looked up from his writing, as Hatherly came into the room.

"You're rather deserting our guests, aren't you, Deryk?" he suggested pointedly.

"Oh, they'll be getting ready for lunch," Deryk answered, looking at the clock. "I say, dad, while we're discussing our future arrangements, I should just like to say something about the money question——"

Sir Aylmer interrupted him with a quick shake of the head.

"That's all settled," he said. "Manisty will act as banker for you. And, when you go to America in the autumn, Hatherly will, of course, pay for everything."

"But that means I have nothing of my own."

Sir Aylmer turned to him with an expression of bland surprise.

"But it's all your own. You never went short of anything the last two years, did you?"

He turned to Hatherly with a smile, and Hatherly, too, smiled and shook his head. Deryk had a despairing sense of powerlessness. The two men were so old and unsympathetic; they were so cunning, too. . . . It seemed to have been all rehearsed.

"I never had a penny without having to go and ask for it," he went on doggedly.

"But was it ever refused?" his father asked with a display of mild reason. He had that morning examined a batch of accounts, including the bill for a pearl necklace.

"No, but I don't want to ask for it every time. I'm twenty-five, dad, and I think I'm to be trusted. There's not a man I know of my own age who has to go to his father every time he wants to buy a paper."

Sir Aylmer ignored obvious retorts and contented himself with turning to Hatherly.

"How much shall I give him, Ted?" he asked. Hatherly was unable to answer quickly enough, and he looked at Deryk. "How much do you need? I want a figure to cover your clothes, books and personal expenses, all that sort of thing. Anything out of the ordinary, like this trip to Hellenopolis, I'll pay independently. Will five hundred a year be enough as long as you're living here? If you take rooms in town, of course, I shall have to make it more. I don't want you to feel that you're tied to my apron strings."

Deryk was so far wanting in a money-sense that he found it impossible to suggest a figure. At Oxford he had been given an allowance of four hundred pounds for three terms of eight weeks each. It was not the amount of the sum that mattered, however, but the conditions attaching to it.

"You mean an allowance?" he asked deliberately.

"Yes."

"But that's the same thing as at present. Instead of sending my bills in to you, I shall pay them out of my allowance; and, if you don't like the way I'm spending the money, you can stop the allowance."

For the first time Sir Aylmer allowed a shadow of annoyance to cloud his face.

"If you're going to put the money to proper uses, Deryk," he said, "you know that I shan't arbitrarily stop it; if you're going to put it to improper uses, you can hardly expect me to encourage it very actively."

"But I want to be the judge!" Deryk cried. "You're simply treating me like a child! How much longer have I got to go on like this?"

Sir Aylmer looked at him with exasperating patience and then beckoned to Hatherly.

"You must explain to Deryk—apparently he's incapable of seeing it for himself—that I am not in a condition to stand all this argument," he said. "I really don't know what's come over him. You can tell him, however, that I have spoken my last word on this subject. He can take the allowance, or he can go on as he's doing at present; if he takes it, I'll pay the first quarter's cheque into his bank to-day. But he must understand that I've seen so many young men victimised for their money that anything I leave will be administered by trustees until he's thirty. And he must understand that I decline to have this discussion re-opened."

Hatherly walked to the fire like a well-disciplined executioner and took the boy by the arm. There was a moment's impulse to struggle, but Deryk realised in time that nothing was to be gained by growing noisy and indignant with two men who declined to pursue the argument. He allowed himself to be led away and, in his bewilderment, to be lectured by Hatherly.

"If you want to kill your father, you're going the right way about it," he began sternly. Then he handed on Sir Aylmer's last words. At "thirty" Deryk gasped. The next years of his life—all his life, for anything that he knew to the contrary—had been neatly arranged and pigeon-holed. His father was treating him like a university endowment; he was ever to be at the mercy of a man too old to remember his own youth and surrounded by other old men whom he had broken to his will. . . .

He jumped up and looked out of the window to the sweeping drive and the copses of rhododendrons glistening in the rain.

"I've had about as much of this as I can stand," he remarked between his teeth.

Hatherly started involuntarily. Similar words, uttered in a similar tone, had been spoken by Sir Aylmer, when the two were young men together. Deryk's attitude was the attitude of his father, as he looked out over the wet roofs of Lincoln's Inn with hot, angry eyes.

"Now do look at the thing sensibly!" he implored with a sudden, cajoling softness of voice.

But Deryk had flung away towards the dining-room. Hatherly waited until he was out of sight and then hurried back to Sir Aylmer.

5

At intervals throughout the afternoon Deryk was to be found in the hall, speeding successive units of the house-party on their scattered ways; and by tea-time the only survivors were George Oakleigh and his sister, who were motoring over to Crowley Court in time to dine with the Daintons. As the last car came to the door, Deryk led Oakleigh aside and pressed a final cigar upon him.

"I was in dead earnest about what we were saying yesterday," he began with assumed truculence. "I've never made a penny in my life, and you think I can't. Well, we shall see. I'm coming to you on Monday morning as a stranger, to tell you my qualifications and see what I can do. I want you to treat me—just like anyone else."

Oakleigh smiled to himself, as he buttoned his coat and lit the cigar.

"How long are you going to keep on the experiment?" he asked.

"If I'm any good at all, I shall go on for some time. If at the end of a month I see no prospect of keeping my head above water, I shall turn the thing down and confess myself beaten."

From his combative manner and nervously emphatic speech Deryk might have been gravely affronted, and his companion sought to modify any early disparagement of his powers.

"A month's not long," he suggested reasonably. "You've got no stock-in-trade, remember; no articles or sketches up your sleeve; nothing to shew me. I shall have to set you jobs and see how you do them. I don't mind, of course, but it's a hand-to-mouth existence for you." He derived a melancholy amusement from contemplation of the experiment and of Deryk's coming disillusionment when he contrasted modern Fleet Street with his present idealised, Lucien de Rubempré conception of it. "What does Sir Aylmer think of the idea?" he asked.

"I haven't told him," said Deryk shortly. "This is simply for my private satisfaction. The guv'nor went out when he wasn't much older than I am, half the men I know at Oxford have gone out, one way or another. I want to see if I'm as good a man as they are."

"Then you don't want it talked about?"

"I should think not!" Deryk exclaimed. "If I make good, I expect I shall be quick enough to talk about it. But I don't want congenital idiots like Summertown or Deganway coming and being funny; and I don't want the halfpenny press talking about 'Millionaire's Son Taking His Coat Off.' I'm not telling—even the guv'nor, and you'll be helping me if you give me an excuse for coming to London at all. Tell him I'm bursting to hear all about your propaganda; one lie's as good as another."

Oakleigh considered the proposal in silence. He knew Deryk so little that he had no standard for judging his eccentricities; but the little conspiracy seemed innocent enough, and the boy's eager, staccato speech and flashing eyes would have made anyone anxious not to disappoint him.

"I'll do what I can," he promised at length. "Now I must go and say good-bye to your father."

The proposal met with so little opposition that Deryk's surface suspicions were roused, and he told himself sardonically that his father was welcoming any opportunity of putting forty-five miles between Ivy Cottage and himself. After a silent and aggrieved dinner, he locked himself in his bedroom, packed an ample supply of clothes and investigated the state of his finances. There was rather more than two hundred pounds at the bank, and this he was prepared to borrow from himself and pay back, as he began to make good. But it was not his money, and he refused to regard it as anything but a loan; when Sir Aylmer put a question at dinner how the first quarter's allowance was to be paid, Deryk replied loftily that this was a matter of indifference to him; if he could not have an independent income, he desired no change in the old system of payment. Hatherly's round, benevolent face became charged with trouble, and he forcibly changed the subject by asking how long Deryk expected to be in London; no definite date could be given, however; and letters had best be sent to the County Club. . . .

"Was he like this when you were abroad?" Sir Aylmer asked in tired perplexity, when he was alone with Hatherly after dinner.

The morning's conversation with Deryk, the sudden, rebellious look, the nervous outburst of defiance that seemed to identify son and father across the abyss of a generation occupied Hatherly's mind to the exclusion of everything else.

"I'm not comfortable about him, Aylmer," he said gravely. "There's going to be trouble, if you don't give him his head."

For a moment Sir Aylmer's lack-lustre eyes and lined face became almost youthful and combative.

"If you mean, by giving him his head——" he began with a low, explosive rumble.

"I don't mean anything," Hatherly interrupted. "I haven't in the least thought it out. Rightly or wrongly Deryk feels that he's reached a breaking-point, and, if you don't clear his mind of that feeling, there'll be trouble."

Sir Aylmer leaned receptively back in his chair with expectant patience.

"What can he do?" he asked, as Hatherly continued silent.

"What did you do at pretty much his age?" was the answer.

For some time Sir Aylmer, too, was silent; then his face cleared.

"If Deryk shewed me that he meant business, if he's prepared to work out his own salvation," he begun deliberately.

"You appreciate the price?" Hatherly asked drily. "You'd never see him again,—whether he succeeded or failed. Don't make any mistake about that, Aylmer. You *won't* appreciate that he's growing up and you *won't* recognise how much of your own old Adam you've handed on to that boy."

Sir Aylmer beckoned with a jerk of his head and allowed himself to be helped to his feet.

"Let's hope he comes back from town in a more reasonable temper," was all that he would say.

From nine o'clock until midnight Deryk wandered dispiritedly from one room of the house to another. After the excitement of the last days his mind had gone flat, and he yearned for a little sympathy. The distant sight of his father, laboriously wheeling himself across the hall from the dining-room, made him want to run and confess, to explain things and await the kindly-humorous judgment that other fellows seemed to get from *their* fathers. The guv'nor had grown so unapproachable in recent years; he seemed so old, so uncommunicative, so much wrapped up in his own ill-health. In spite of it all, perhaps because of it all—the satanic pride, the masterful will, the unexplaining habit of authority—Deryk was reluctant and almost afraid to engage him; there was no great satisfaction in defeating your own father. . . . If only he would *see*. . . . For all its ungainly size and awesome silence, Deryk did not want to say good-bye to Ripley Court; the orderly, comfortable routine, which made life so effortless and void of small worry; the paternal friendliness of Phillimore and the old servants, who still called him "Master Deryk" and treated him like a schoolboy; the solicitude of Mrs Benson, who felt dishonoured when he missed a course and always provided a *bombe à la Nesselrode* for dinner on the night of his return home. . . . And he had found no time to enjoy it; two-thirds of the books were not yet unpacked, and he had been thinking of the library all the time he had been abroad.

In Celebes a letter from his father told him that the new organ had now been installed in the chapel; he had been too busy to try it, he had not been inside the chapel, he had been nowhere, he had done nothing. . . .

Worn out with the excitement of the last three days, he was beginning to undress, when Hatherly strolled in behind the pretext of finishing his cigar in company. Deryk found him almost exasperatingly bland, non-committal, diplomatic —"enjoy yourself in London—the guv'nor says you mustn't miss this opportunity of buying your kit for Hellenopolis—send him a line from time to time to say how you're getting on—" The Hatherly skin contained at least three Hatherlys, one a friend almost of his own age, rather steadier and sobered by life, but eminently sympathetic; there was also an old man who became cowed, submissive, unsympathetic, repellent, whenever he met Sir Aylmer, speaking in whispers and falling into his allotted place in the line of Bensons and Phillimores who had grown prematurely old out of compliment to Ripley Court and its master. And there was this intermediate Hatherly who flitted like a highly-strung ambassador between library and study whenever the air grew electric . . . and satisfied no one. *They* knew that something was wrong, but they tried to distract his attention, as though he were a child with a cut knee. Faith-healing was no good for a fracture; he was not to be wheedled into forgetting Dina, as though she were a circus that his father did not want him to visit. . . .

He woke from his reverie to find that Hatherly was still speaking.

". . . I felt that the sooner you appreciated that the better," he was saying.

"I'm afraid I wasn't listening," said Deryk unapologetically, as he tossed his clothes into an armchair.

"I was telling you that you were upsetting the guv'nor very badly," Hatherly repeated, and Deryk at once realised the atmosphere which was being imported: it was always "your father" when there was a rebuke to be administered, "the guv'nor" when the conciliation tap was being turned on.

"And I warn you frankly that he's not in a state to stand extra worry; we've kept him alive in defiance of probability for a good many years, but he's a cracked pitcher." Deryk jumped into bed and picked up a book from the table at his side, but Hatherly took it gently away before he could begin to read it. "What's the matter, old man?" he asked in a voice that he had used to overcome the shyness and antagonism of sixteen years before. "I feel that we haven't got to the bottom of things."

The sudden, familiar kindliness of manner made Deryk cover his face as though the light were hurting his eyes. He hated to worry old Hats, but he could not stand having his father's death-warrant eternally fluttered in his face.

"I don't think the guv'nor's treating me fairly," he burst out petulantly. "Every man I know——"

"D'you know a single one a tithe as rich as *your* father?" Hatherly interrupted. "You're going to find out before you die that there are precious few things that people won't do for a sufficiently large money prize—young boys marrying old women, young girls selling themselves to old men, lying, cheating, corruption. People who wouldn't kill one man to steal his purse will engineer a war and kill thousands on either side for a beggarly diamond mine. Well, old man, as long as you're only a beneficiary, you're safeguarded from a good deal; when the money's your own, you'll be far more vulnerable." He took out his case and lit a cigarette from the stump of his cigar. "This isn't an idea of yesterday, your father's not trying to score off you in any way," he went on in a manner that brought the discussion closer to actuality than ever before. "We argued it out before you were born. Your father came to England and told me that your mother would soon have a child; I well remember, though I don't think it had ever occurred to him before, how terribly frightened he was to think what might happen, if the child came in for all his money before it was old enough to look after itself. Or your mother, for that matter. We set up an elaborate trust—I'll explain it all to you, when you get back here—

to secure that, if your father died, your mother should be reasonably protected from men who wanted to marry her for her money. And we included you, as your father told you this morning, by arranging for the money to be administered by trustees until you were thirty. After that, if you're going to the devil, you'll go; until then—I'll put it quite plainly—you'll have to get the assent of your father or of the trustees for every penny you want to spend. I had seen my share of rich young men coming their croppers and I advised him, as a solicitor; if you think it's an unreasonable scheme, fight me about it by all means, don't worry the pater. But, as I'm old and you're young, before you fight me, just consider what you'd do, if you had the responsibility of leaving about twenty million sterling to your son. And you must assume that you're fond of the son," he added softly; "you must assume that he's the only thing in the world that you've got to live for since your wife died."

Deryk lay on his back, staring at the ceiling and telling himself with honourable detachment that old Hats was having the best of this; shortly and simply he had raised the level of the discussion and, if he spoke still as an ambassador, it was as an ambassador who wanted to help; was little of the diplomatic skirmishing which had preceded the morning's interview with his father. And, as they were getting to grips, surely this was the moment for a frank question about Dina—was the opposition imaginary, what did the guv'nor want? Deryk had the question half-framed, but something that he decided must be instinct kept him silent; it was not chance forgetfulness that had led Sir Aylmer to use the truth so economically, and it was neither oblivion nor toleration which made so inveterate a stickler for decorum refrain from alluding to an incident at the ball which had set every other tongue in the house and neighbourhood wagging. . . .

"This trust thing can't be upset, I suppose?" Deryk asked.

"Only by your father. Of course, he can modify it at will or tear it up."

"Then, if he liked, he could take so much money out of trust and settle it on me? He could give me, say, five hundred or a thousand a year absolutely of my own and leave all the rest locked up?"

Hatherly nodded.

"Undoubtedly. I'm quite sure he won't, though."

"But, if anyone's going to marry me for my money, they'll run the risk and marry me for my expectations. I mean, any money-lender. . . . And you can't go to the devil very much on five hundred. Why don't you suggest that to the guv'nor?"

"Because he's impossible to move, and, if he could be moved, I don't think it would be reasonable to try. He's never refused you money when you've asked for it, and, if you take a sudden dislike to asking for it, the natural inference is that you're busy about something that he won't approve of." Hatherly stopped abruptly, as though he were giving Deryk a considered opportunity for confession. "As for marrying on expectations," he resumed slowly and disappointedly, "you'd better send any prospective brides for a short talk with me before they take the plunge; the powers of the trustees are left very wide."

Throwing away his cigarette, he got up to go, feeling, as many have felt before and since, that he would have done better to go five minutes earlier. Deryk had reverted to his grievance, and he was himself using the language of menace which he deplored in Sir Aylmer.

"I suppose different generations can't be expected to see a thing with the same eyes," he said, coming back to the bedside to lay a hand on Deryk's shoulder and leave a less unsympathetic impression behind him. "But I should like you to think what you'll do with your sons; and I do want you to remember that we have only one father in this world. Good-night, old man."

Deryk lay for nearly half an hour, staring resignedly at the ceiling; everybody was so exasperatingly reasonable that he longed for an arbitrator to advise him; he could see *their* points, but they wouldn't see his; he would like, say, Raymond to hold the scales, arrive at the truth, impose his findings on both sides . . . But if Raymond decided against him? That was the trouble; neither he nor his father would abide by the decision, if it went the wrong way. It was almost the one thing they had in common. And he did not propose to go about like Panurge, asking advice whether to marry, yea or nay. One had one's pride; one preferred not to discuss this sort of thing even with people like dear, well-intentioned Yolande. . . . And, by the way, it was so easy for her to talk about "the pride of a snail" and what she would do and what she had done, but Lord Stornaway was indestructible as an English public building; you could disagree with him all day without killing him; everybody did, and he thrived on it . . .

The bell by his bed rang, and he picked up the receiver.

"Hallo?"

"Oh, Deryk, what luck! I was terrified that Mr. Phillimore might answer it. I only wanted to say good-night."

At sound of her voice his heart seemed to leap.

"Dina, I've been longing to talk to you all day! Are you going to be in to-morrow morning? I want to see you and I simply couldn't get away while the house was full of people."

"I shall be at the Grange till seven," Idina answered. "I have to lunch there on Sundays and I'm afraid I can't get away before."

Deryk smothered an expression of disappointment.

"Then I'm afraid I shan't see you," he said. "I've got to go up to town in the afternoon and I may be away some time."

"Oh, Deryk!"

Her plaintive tone touched something deep down in him, rousing a new passionate desire to protect her.

"It can't be helped, darling," he said. "I wish I could explain, I'm worried nearly off my head, but it's no good. I'd tell you the whole thing, if I could, but I can't. I don't know how long I shall be away and I can't tell you why I'm going, and you mustn't try to find out. If anyone asks you where I am, it's better that you shouldn't know."

Out of the distance her voice sounded troubled and unhappy.

"But I don't understand, dear!"

"And I can't explain," he answered. "Everything's damnable, damnable, damnable! Some day I'll tell you all about it, but I can't now. I'll try to write to you, but you mustn't expect anything much. You'll write to me, won't you? Send your letters to the County Club, St. James' Square."

There was a long silence. Then a distressed voice said,

"Deryk, you *have* made me miserable!"

His nerves were so much overstrung that he could hardly control his voice.

"Dina darling! don't imagine I'm doing this for the fun of the thing! I tell you, I'm nearly out of my mind. If I could tell you, you'd understand at once, but I can't. Say good-night and give me your blessing. God knows I need it."

"Good-night, Deryk."

He laughed in despite of himself.

"Properly now, Dina."

"Good-night, darling."

"No! Say 'Good-night, darling; bless you!' "

There was the same pause as before; the voice sank to the same caressing whisper.

"Good-night, darling, darling! Bless you always!"

It was long before he slept that night; and in the morning the lids of his eyes were red and tired, and his nerves seemed to be lacerated. He avoided meeting his father or Hatherly until luncheon, and then the conversation was deliberately turned to the great peace propaganda which George Oakleigh and his uncle had been carrying out for three or four years.

When the car came round to the door after tea, Deryk went into his father's study to say good-bye.

"Well, I don't seem to have seen very much of you since you came back," said Sir Aylmer, as they shook hands. "Enjoy yourself in town, but don't be away too long. Manisty starts in a month, and there's a lot to do before that."

"Yes,—if I go," said Deryk.

Sir Aylmer looked at him closely.

"But we arranged all that yesterday," he said; and then less sharply, "It was your idea, you were anxious to go."

"I may change my mind; I don't know." Deryk buttoned his coat slowly and began to draw on his gloves. "Did Hats tell you that we had a talk last night?" he asked.

"He mentioned it. I cannot re-open the discussion."

Deryk pursued his own course doggedly.

"I'm not at all satisfied with the way things were left," he said. "I made a suggestion to Hats——"

Sir Aylmer raised a hand to check him.

"I heard all about it," he said. "I'm not disposed to make any alteration in the trust."

Deryk shrugged his shoulders, picked up his hat and umbrella and shook hands with Hatherly. Then he came back and stood before his father.

"You've made up your mind to that?" he asked. "It's no use raising the question again? All right, I won't."

He started to the door, but Sir Aylmer called him back.

"Let me know when I'm to expect you back here," he said.

"I have no idea," Deryk answered slowly.

CHAPTER III

A QUESTION OF PRIDE

She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift.
ROBERT BROWNING: My Last Duchess.

I

ALMOST before he left Ripley Court, long before he reached London, Deryk appreciated that henceforth he would never know the ease or pleasure of being undiplomatic; he had his part to play now with everyone that he met, he was playing it already—rather well. Thus Sir Aylmer really believed that he was spending half a week poring over the files of some ridiculous propagandist review; Idina did not imagine, *could* not imagine that his sudden departure for an indefinite time and an unstated purpose was in any way connected with her. George Oakleigh fancied, tolerantly enough, that he was indulging a very young, very rich man's romantic foible and that he did not want it advertised. This was the attitude adopted at "Peace" office in Bouverie Street and at Prince's Gardens, where he was almost immediately taken to dine and meet Bertrand Oakleigh. He was amused to find himself reckoned a serious young man, experimenting in life and seeing it from all angles, though the amusement made rapid way for indignation when he thought of the unnecessary effort, the gratuitous pain and the squandered energy in which his father's folly was involving him. This business of seeing whether he could earn his own living was unwelcome in itself and made doubly unwelcome by this eternal play-acting, all these excuses, pretences, half-truths and reservations. On his first night in London he dined at the County Club, though he well knew that he could not afford to dine there habitually. He was hardly seated before Deganway fluttered up, curled, scented and immaculate in his affected, invertebrate way, waving an eye-glass, addressing him as "my dear" and shrilly demanding news. Deryk was not at ease under his friend's fusillade of questions; he refused to share a bottle of wine, he was vague and unconvincing about his presence in London on a Sunday night and, as the dinner proceeded, he had to tell Deganway that he was asking too many questions about matters which really were not his business. Not that it made much difference, Heaven knew! Deganway was silent for thirty seconds, then he began with another catechism, and, whether he got an answer or not, it was quite certain that he would chatter his way round London, telling everyone what *he* had made up his mind to treat as true, not the truth as his victims gave it him. Without a trace of malice, Deganway was the most indiscreet, the most inaccurate and one of the most dangerous men in London, whose influence for evil was unaffected by the number of times on which he was proved to be wrong. On the Monday evening Deryk met Lady Dainton at dinner and was told publicly that he was engaged to be married and that Mr. Deganway had said so; he spent a week trying to overtake the story and in the end demanded an explanation of Deganway, who indignantly denied having told Lady Dainton any such thing and instantly went on to enquire whether Deryk was not in fact engaged, as he only wanted to get hold of the right end of the stick. . . .

"When I'm engaged, I shall have the announcement put in the papers," Deryk told him.

Deganway looked at him reproachfully and went off in search of Summertown, who knew all about this engagement and had known all about it for days: Miss Penrose was a companion or governess or something in the neighbourhood of Ripley Court—"quite a lady, you know, and all that sort of thing"; Lancing was rather hard hit about her, but the old man wouldn't recognise the engagement. Here Summertown's grip on the narrative grew slack. Obviously the old man *had* refused his assent, because Deryk was in London with a set face and uninviting manner, doing—God knew what. . . . Within a week Deryk incautiously allowed himself to be seen in the library of the Club with a sheaf of proof slips; Deganway looked at him with round eyes, put up his glass, grimaced, murmured, "My *dear!*" and again sought out Summertown.

In the meantime George Oakleigh was conscientiously putting Deryk through his paces in Bouverie Street and atoning for the necessary harshness of editorial supervision by loading him with gifts of incidental literary and musical criticism. It was weighting the scales in his favour, but Deryk's face and nervous manner hinted that he needed to have the scales weighted in his own favour. And, if the initiative had not come from him, Yolande Stornaway would have supplied it. She met Deryk unexpectedly in "Peace" office and poured out her usual stream of questions.

"You've really had it out with your father?" she enquired breathlessly, her eager little face radiant with hope. "And this is the result? Good old Deryk! I didn't know you'd got it in you."

"I've not had anything out with my father," he answered cautiously. "I wanted to see——"

He left the explanation unfinished lest he should explain too much.

"You wanted to see whether you were strong enough to stand up to him? What does he think about it? What did you tell him? Deryk, I'm simply bursting to know!"

Deryk laughed in spite of himself.

"So I observe. But there's nothing to tell. Oakleigh and I had a talk at Ripley, and I told him that any man of decent education could make a living with his pen—he was crabbing the ordinary public school type of education; he told me to come and see if it was as easy as I thought. So I'm here." He watched a look of incredulity come into her eyes. "Ask *him,* if you don't believe me."

Yolande pouted impatiently.

"I've no doubt it's all true—so far as it goes. . . . But I won't make a nuisance of myself, if you don't want to tell me. Good-bye, Deryk; unless you'll come and share hashed mutton in my flat? I'm in Stafford's Inn, just the other side of Fleet Street."

After a moment's hesitation he accepted the invitation, knowing well that he would tell her more than he then intended, but hungry for the sympathetic society of a woman. Yolande led the way proudly up three flights of creaking, uncarpeted stairs to a tiny set of rooms overlooking the Record Office. With their low ceilings, white-panelled walls and green window-boxes, they conveyed a suggestion of an Oxford college; but the decoration and furniture were wholly feminine. While she tidied herself for dinner, Deryk examined her books and pictures; they were sufficiently "advanced" and unintelligible to impress him, as, for the same reason, they had impressed her uncle Raymond—with her astonishing youth. Everything that was modern, rational and in revolt against the tyranny of age seemed to have been collected into her incendiary shelves. . . . At dinner, forgetful of her promise, she opened a new fusillade of questions, and, before he left, he had told her, as he knew he would, almost everything that she wanted to know; and, being unpledged to secrecy, she privately reserved the right of discussing at least a portion of his scheme with her friends. Two days after their meeting, Deryk was invited to lunch with Manisty and found the editor of the "Quarterly Journal of Archæology" at the same table; and, dining later with Raymond in Pont Street, he was introduced to Lord Ilkley, who in turn invited him to lunch at Ilkley House the following Sunday and listen to a jejune suggestion that the marbles which the third Lord Ilkley had stolen from Athens at the beginning of the nineteenth century were perhaps worth arranging, cataloguing, photographing and describing by a man who knew something about this sort of thing. Deryk spent an intoxicating Sunday in the great Georgian house on Campden Hill. In the evening he sought out Manisty and told him that he would not be able to accompany him to Hellenopolis. If the present run continued unbroken, it was not a question of failure and surrender to his father; he had to solve the problem of finding physical strength and a day long enough to meet the demands of his work.

"He's shaping quite well," George Oakleigh told Yolande, when they met a few days later. "Of course, it isn't a fair test; he's been helped as only people of his kind *are* helped; with just as good qualifications, another man would never have been boosted into work as he's been, but I haven't the heart to tell him so; he's obviously so pleased with life. And he does hate me so, when I cut the epigrams and purple patches out of his articles. . . . How long's he going on with the job? I'm due to go and see his father pretty soon and I've been more or less sworn to secrecy."

Yolande could offer no assistance, but the ground was cleared before Oakleigh went down to Sussex. On calling at the County Club for letters, Deryk found an indignant note from Hatherly—Hatherly now the familiar, the bravo, the hired assassin. "Your father is very much concerned to know what has happened to you," he was told. "It is six weeks since you went to town, and you have not had the ordinary kindness to say a single word of what you are doing. By a side-wind we hear that you have abandoned the idea of going to Asia Minor. And that is all. Do you consider that this is the way to behave to your father?"

For some reason that he could not put into words, the letter made Deryk angry. In reply he wrote loftily: "Why is it always necessary to assume that I cannot be out of your sight for a few days without getting up to mischief? As George Oakleigh can tell you, when he goes down next week, I have a bet on that I can earn a living at journalism without any previous training. I think I'm doing quite well for a beginner." He added that he found it pleasant to have a little money of his own, for which he did not have to account to anyone; but on reflection the taunt seemed puerile, and he re-wrote the letter without it.

Then he addressed himself to Idina. It was becoming daily harder to say anything in his letters to her, but the experiment was succeeding so well that at the end of six months he was determined to see his father and lay all his cards on the table. He would then be in a position to support a wife in some sort, and, if his father really intended to behave melodramatically, he must take the consequences. Not that he *could,* not that he *could!* Good Heavens! the money wasn't going to be left away from him to a Home for Lost Dogs. And yet—you never knew where to have a man like that. . . . Deryk, strong, sane and conciliatory, constructed the scene afresh and with greater appreciation every time that he seemed to be climbing a step higher in his self-sought career. He only wished that he could share his elation with Idina, but you could not very well brag about what you were doing without explaining why you were doing it; and his only explanation was a moral certainty that his father did not wish him to marry her. . . . There had been so little common memory on which to draw that these daily letters grew harder and harder to write; he wondered impatiently whether it would not be wiser to discontinue them; yet she seemed to like them, to judge from her letters to him; apparently she always went out before breakfast to meet the postman . . . and read them again and again during the day . . . and had one last look at them before turning out the light. . . . He thought that that kind of thing was only done in books or on the stage. . . . It was an extraordinary thing that he, who was, after all, a very ordinary person, should mean so much to anyone. . .

At Ripley Court George Oakleigh was required to report all that he knew of Deryk's activities; he gave the facts without comment. Deryk was reviewing for three or four papers and writing the musical notes for the "Art Review" and "The Critic"; in "Peace" office he was learning to do some of the sub-editing and allowed to try his hand on an occasional leader. There were also some miscellaneous sketches and articles for odd corners in odd moments, for, with the exception of the Ilkley Papers, he was giving the whole of a long day to the work. At night Oakleigh was introducing him to political London.

"It will be a valuable experience for him," was Sir Aylmer's non-committal comment. "I'm afraid it must be absorbing a good deal of your time, though."

"I've taken a great fancy to him," Oakleigh replied, truthfully enough. "I admire his tireless vitality; I should think he could make a success of anything he undertook."

Sir Aylmer was gratified, if not enlightened. After his visitor had left, he talked long with Hatherly, and Raymond on his next visit was minutely examined. Shortly before Easter Hatherly paid a visit to London and tried to get first-hand information. It was a project that he had had in mind for some time, and he was driven to action by one of Sir Aylmer's periodical relapses, which sent him in panic to bring Deryk home at all costs. Arriving in Bouverie Street he found that Oakleigh had left the office and that Deryk was gone home to dress and dine before a concert. He met Yolande, however, at the end of Chancery Lane and persuaded her to dine with him in the Savoy Grill Room. By an excited, ill-considered attack on Deryk for heartlessness, he roused her to say more than she would willingly have disclosed to a man whom age, in her eyes, made Deryk's natural enemy.

"I daresay it *is* very unfeeling," she exclaimed, "and I'm sorry for Sir Aylmer, but he brought it on himself; he was treating Deryk like a child."

"I've told you that his father nearly died last night," said Hatherly indignantly, "he may still die at any moment. What's Deryk doing? Why's he doing it? I refuse to believe this nonsense about a wager with Oakleigh."

"You refuse to believe that he *may* be seeing if he can live independently of Sir Aylmer?" Yolande enquired deliberately. "Candidly, Mr. Hatherly, in his place and with a spark of pride, I'd do the same. I would *not* be told what I was to do, whom I might marry——"

"The question has never arisen," Hatherly interrupted.

"It's bound to be always in the background," Yolande retorted.

"Do you think a girl will be so much glamoured by Deryk when she hears that he's broken off all relations with his father?" Hatherly asked with a mixture of worldliness and malice.

"If she's worth a damn!" Yolande cried with a vehemence that made the neighbours turn wonderingly round. "I beg your pardon, I'm afraid I'm getting rather excited. You see, Deryk's a sort of brother to me; I should have married him, if you and Sir Aylmer hadn't tried to make me. I'm young and quite pretty, I could make him do anything I wanted, we're poor and he's rich, I'm an Honourable——"

Hatherly was embarrassed, and his expression betrayed it.

"You young people are altogether too modern for me!" he exclaimed.

"Have I shocked you?" Yolande laughed. "I'm sorry, but, if there's one thing I hate it's mealy-mouthedness. Do look things in the face! There are limits even to a millionaire's power, if people have the pluck to stand up to him."

"Well, at least I know the explanation of Deryk's extraordinary behaviour," said Hatherly, as he signalled to the waiter for his bill.

"But it isn't extraordinary!" she protested. "It's the most natural thing in the world. And you might have guessed it from the time that Deryk disappeared at the ball. The awful thing about Ripley Court is that there are no women there, nobody to *understand,* nobody to help poor old Deryk."

Hatherly paid his bill and pocketed his change with grave deliberation.

"I sometimes feel that we're too old," he murmured to himself. "But, if Deryk is—contemplating anything, he might reasonably be expected to consult his father first. If he's engaged already, I think he's behaved abominably."

"He's not engaged," Yolande reassured him. "For the rest, I should most reasonably advise him to save his breath. If Sir Aylmer objects, he'll have to fight or be written down a cur; if Sir Aylmer doesn't object, it's waste of time. Mr. Hatherly, I feel an awful pig to let you take me out to dinner and then talk like this——"

Hatherly shook his head wistfully, as he looked at the bright eyes and vivid colour in a normally pale face.

"The rod's in pickle, my dear young lady," he told her. "When *your* children discover that *you're* too old——"

"Ah, but I shan't marry; I've got work——"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" interrupted Hatherly, as they rose from the table.

He returned to Aston Ripley the next morning, sharing a compartment with Sidney Dawson, who had stayed in London as long as he could bear the sense of solitude in a crowded city and was now rhythmically returning to the Grange for as long as he could bear the monotony and his sister's querulous tongue. On the way down he enquired conventionally after Sir Aylmer and expressed the hope that this story about Deryk might not be true.

"I don't know what the story is," answered Hatherly, setting his teeth.

"Somebody was talking about it at the Club," said Dawson with a pretended effort of memory. "Oh, it was young Deganway. He seemed to think Lancing was paying considerable attentions at the ball—I didn't see anything myself, I'm sure——"

"To Miss Penrose?" Hatherly asked carelessly. "They've been brought up like brother and sister since they were small children."

"Deganway told me that they were engaged and that Lancing refused to recognise the engagement," said Dawson, watching his companion's face narrowly. "There'd been a row, according to the story, and the boy had been turned out of the house."

Hatherly laughed, but the laugh rang false.

"I hate to spoil a good story," he said, "but there's not a word of truth in it. What can have prompted Deganway——"

"Oh, he didn't start it. Summertown discovered young Lancing at the Club, writing an article for some review; you can probably trace it back to that. My sister was saying something about it, too; Marsham or Forsyte had mentioned the subject. . . ."

On arriving at Ripley Court, Hatherly found Sir Aylmer rather stronger. He gave a full account of his visit and plucked up courage to add a word of unwelcome advice.

"You can't bring Deryk back by force," he pointed out, "and, so long as he's making money, he can't be starved out. You can meet him over the money question—and then you'll have no control over his actions; or you can go on as you're doing and trust that the girl won't marry him when she finds what a love-in-a-cottage business it's going to be. Those are the alternatives. I want you to appreciate that, if you go on, you'll lose Deryk for good and all; I told you that weeks ago."

Sir Aylmer sat with his elbows on the arms of his chair and his head pressed between his hands. In Hatherly's absence he, too, had been thinking. Looking up at length, he shook his head.

"In the long run he'll have to go his own way," he said. "I'm not going to leave the money away from him, and you know that as well as I do. He'd know it, too, if he stopped to think what he means to me."

"Then, assuming that he wants to marry this Penrose girl, what's your objection?" asked Hatherly.

"To the girl? None at all. I'd have found her a lucrative job at the other end of the world, if I had," Sir Aylmer added grimly, with a ferocious determination that brought a catch in Hatherly's breathing. "I don't even *say* that she's unduly—affected by the money. But she'll be a drag on Deryk. He wants someone running along the towpath cheering and forcing him to make just one more spurt, when he feels that he's not got it in him. She'll never do that." He looked before him with a haggard face. "But, if he wants to marry her, he shall. I made up my mind years ago that I wouldn't stand in the way. And I won't, even if I thought her far more unsuitable than I do. I want to be sure, though, that he really does want to. He's so young, he's seen so few women. . . . And, when you're in love for the first time, you're so certain of yourself; and, when it's all over and you look back on it, you simply can't understand what you were thinking about. I've been through it, Ted."

Hatherly made no answer. The one girl with whom he had been in love had been drowned in a shipwreck; he had never looked for another. Sir Aylmer, as a young man, had seemed unable to live without female companionship; in his will there were various sums of money for women who would be withered and unlovely, possibly dead, before it became ripe for payment.

"Have you thought of a time-limit?" he asked after some moments' space. "Recognise the engagement, but say they're not to marry for a couple of years."

"If Deryk's the man I should like to think him, he'd feel bound to marry her, even if he were utterly tired of her at the end of the time. Foolish, but honourable," he added contemptuously.

Another solution of the difficulty was being attempted while they talked. As Idina walked home from the Grange, she was met by Sidney Dawson, who told her that he had taken the liberty of bringing her down some flowers from London and leaving them at Ivy Cottage. They looked so beautiful that he could not resist them, he said, and it was such a bad time for flowers in the country. Idina flushed with pleasure, when she saw them, and made him sit down while she unpacked and put them in water. Their walks had hitherto stopped short at the gate of the garden, when he would lift his hat with a certain flourish, bow low and walk away, swinging his stick and holding himself very erect; it was the first time that he had been inside the house since her father's death. He sat with his cane and gloves on his knees, watching the quick movements of her pliant body; she had rolled up her sleeves, baring graceful white arms, and her fingers, glistening with water, were slender and tapering. Suddenly he found himself on his feet, asking her to marry him. At first she did not seem to understand, but, when he repeated the words, her eyes filled with dismay and distress, and she could only look at him and shake her head.

Of what happened afterwards Idina preserved no clear recollection. The attack was so unexpected that minutes passed before she could think connectedly; she had never looked upon Dawson as a man who wanted to marry her or anyone else, he had never shewn her anything but a considerate courtesy. And, in accepting insignificant politenesses and attentions, she had surely never behaved or spoken in a way to rouse his hopes. No one was to blame, but she felt immeasurably sorry for him, as he stood before her protesting, deprecating, repeating himself. He had apparently been speaking for some time, but she had not caught his drift; telling her that there was, of course, a considerable difference of age, but that she would never regret it; he knew that her life was not happy and asked nothing better than to devote himself to her happiness. She should do what she liked, live where she chose; he had a house in Eaton Square, and they could get it back, when the lease ran out, or, if she preferred the country, there was the Grange, or they could live abroad. She had never been out of England since her return from India; he talked of a villa on the Riviera or at Naples, a house in Florence, another villa in Normandy for the summer. . . .

Idina waited for him to make an end, but he spoke desperately, like a man arguing for his life and knowing that death would come when the thin-drawn argument ended.

"I'm sorry, I'd do anything not to hurt you, but it's impossible," she said.

"You think I'm too old!" he began excitedly.

"Oh, it isn't that!" Idina cried, lacing and unlacing her fingers in her distress.

He took a step forward and caught one of her hands.

"Can't you ever care for me—at all?" he whispered. His voice was pleading, his eyes looked at her as though he were a dog begging to be caressed.

"I *do* care for you!" she answered. "But it's impossible—oh, I do wish you didn't seem to mind so much!"

He relinquished her hand and stood silent with bowed head.

"I won't take 'no' for an answer," he told her with returning steadiness in his tone. "When you've thought it over—I'm afraid I took you by surprise, I thought you couldn't help seeing. . . . Later on——"

"Oh, please don't talk about it again!" she implored him.

"Your answer will still be 'no'?"

"I'm afraid so."

"You are not engaged already?" he asked.

Idina looked up quickly and met his eyes unwaveringly.

"No," she said.

"Then I refuse to take 'no' for an answer," he repeated, —"yet awhile."

2

When Idina reached the Grange next morning, Sidney Dawson was not there. He had returned to town by the last train, leaving his sister in a state of curiosity and excitement, which survived the night and spread tension and nervous unrest through the house. Sidney was pre-eminently a man of method. He wrote punctiliously to warn her of the train to meet and always gave her several days' notice before arriving or leaving; the times of all the meals were altered to conform with his London habits; he methodically drank a glass of sherry half an hour before dinner and as methodically smoked one small cigar after it and a cheroot before going to bed. His day was carefully planned and admitted of no disturbance; breakfast and the morning paper, a constitutional, his letters and a morning call on that dreadful, chirpy vicar, or Sir Aylmer, if he were well enough, or, in the old days, Colonel Penrose. Then followed luncheon, a book, another constitutional and tea; until the evening letters came in, he sat with his sister in the over-furnished under-ventilated drawing-room, acerbating her nerves with thrice-told anecdotes; in her turn she drove him to the limits of endurance with a steady flow of safe but inaccurate generalisations on all subjects. After a week or two Sidney usually found it necessary to see his solicitors. This life had continued for fifteen years, since at the age of thirty he had found his friends getting married and himself left without playfellows.

Miss Dawson was ten years older than her brother and had lived long in half-retirement, struggling with an inherited tendency to diabetes and an embittering grievance that no one needed her. As a girl, no man had ever asked her to marry him: after she had ruled the Grange and its inmates for half a generation, her father left it away from her to Sidney, to whom she must crawl on her knees for bread and butter, as she put it with more vigour than truth; and now her health was vanishing. . . . In the early days of the disease she had talked pleasurably about herself to Forsyte; later she sought spiritual consolation from the vicar of Aston Ripley, who broke into her self-pity with a brisk, mechanical adjuration to fortitude under trial (she was not likely to forget his penny-in-the-slot consolation—"Resignation, dear lady—inscrutable designs—test our faith—endure to the end"—nor the infinitely more artistic sympathy of a priest, who called and called again until the day when her brother remembered his allegiance to the church which exists to put its heel firmly on Papists who tried to worm their way into respectable houses). Thereafter she carried her grievances to the highest tribunal. "I wonder if the Almighty knows what bad odour he's in with Miss Dawson," sighed Raymond Stornaway after an hour of her conversation. When nothing came of that, she began to associate furtively with a number of elderly friends who set themselves to spell out messages from another world; books with mystical titles made their way into her room, when Sidney was in London; her confidential conversation was concerned with "aura," the "subliminal state," "messages" and "astral bodies." Sidney, when at length he heard of it, was scornfully rational, so she took one of his gloves to a clairvoyant, who held it to her forehead and prophesied in a language of her own. There was a recognised stage in all future altercations at which Miss Dawson would quote to him, because she felt that he ought to know, long and astonishingly outspoken communications from the far side of the grave. Nothing that he did was too insignificant for the exasperatingly solicitous notice of his dead friends. . . .

With the belief of the young in the ultimate kindness of their fellows, Idina had considered and faced all her employer's shortcomings. It never occurred to her that an elderly woman could be jealous of youth and good looks or that she would seek consolation in the power of money and the dominion which it still gave her over her dependents. She was exacting, but then she was an invalid; no one could feel personal antagonism to a girl who was doing her best to give satisfaction. . . . Idina ran about the house with a beauty of body, a warmth and softness, of which she was almost unconscious, though Miss Dawson knew that it must waken desire in every man as *she* had never wakened it. Sidney would sit in the drawing-room, drinking tea or pretending to read a book, but devouring her the whole time with his eyes. With his exasperating method he would always excuse himself at the same time, always wander through the garden on to the highroad, always wait for her and escort her home—a fluffy, blue-eyed doll, with still enough youth for her brother to make a fool of himself about her. . . .

Miss Dawson could not resist letting it be known that she was well aware why Sidney now visited her so much more frequently. She gave him her frank opinion that any man of his age was a fool to think of marrying an inexperienced child of twenty and doubly a fool to imagine that he had any attraction but his money. Would he *please*—she did not wish to be unkind—would he *please* look at himself in the glass?

He had looked in the glass the day before and marched out, flowers in hand, with a determined air that aroused his sister's worst misgivings. He had returned some time later and quietly slipped into the car and away to the station, leaving a message that he had been recalled to town. For a moment his sister feared that he had taken the girl with him: it was ascertained that no telegram had been delivered, and that he had left before the evening mail came in. The chauffeur testified, however, that his master had got into an empty carriage. . . . And in the morning Idina arrived at her accustomed time, prepared to go about her accustomed work.

Miss Dawson's anger that her brother should think of marrying Idina was swallowed in a more devastating anger that she should presume to refuse him. Throughout the morning she gave no sign, sitting before a blazing fire with her hands folded in the lap of a black silk dress, a plump, fair woman with rather bright, pale eyes and a sing-song voice, while Idina read the "Times" aloud or took down letters from her dictation. At half-past one she asked the girl to keep her company at luncheon.

"My brother returned to London yesterday evening," she said, to explain her request. "Did you see him by any chance?"

Idina could not help blushing.

"He very kindly brought me some flowers," she said. "I met him just before I got home."

"Can you imagine what can have taken him back?" Miss Dawson went on, indifference masking watchful alertness.

"He didn't say anything about it."

"That was not my question, Miss Penrose," rapped out Miss Dawson, like an animal making its spring.

The girl's confusion told Miss Dawson all that she wanted to know.

"I'm afraid I can't help," said Idina with a hint of obstinacy.

"You give me the idea that you're not speaking the whole truth," said Miss Dawson severely.

Idina attempted no reply, and they went in to luncheon together.

The afternoons were usually the worst time of the day for Idina, as Miss Dawson, ever cold and sensitive to draughts, would lean comfortably back in front of the piled-up fire, requiring her companion to read aloud until tea was brought in. It was almost impossible to keep awake in the airless, musty drawing-room, but, if Idina paused for a moment to listen to the placid, stertorous breathing by the fire, Miss Dawson would rouse at the unfamiliar silence and order her sharply to go on until told to stop. She would go on for a time, but not infrequently the book slipped on to her lap, and her head drooped forward. When she awoke, it was always to find that Miss Dawson was awake before her; she would be reminded that she was paid for her services and that, if it were too much trouble to read a few pages in the afternoon, someone else must be found of more obliging temper. . . .

To-day no book was produced. Miss Dawson settled herself in her chair and demanded to be told what had passed between her brother and the girl the evening before.

"You may not know it, but I've had my eye on you for some time," she announced. "I've seen the way that you've laid yourself out for him——"

"I *didn't!*" Idina burst out indignantly.

Miss Dawson raised her eyebrows and nodded like a mandarin.

"Contradiction wasn't thought polite in my young days," she announced with a set smile, the voice rising a seventh and falling note by note, "and I don't know that it's polite now. When you walk along the roads morning and evening with him, when you accept presents——"

"They were only flowers. And I couldn't *help* it!"

"In my young days we *sometimes* let our elders finish what they were trying to say, and I have to say that this sort of thing cannot possibly be allowed to go on. If you think that it's going to lead to something——" Idina was about to interrupt again, but checked herself in time. "I can't tell whether you expect something more than 'only flowers' next time. Perhaps you don't see that all this is rather unmaidenly. Has my brother ever *said* anything to you?" she asked with a meaning change of tone.

"I refuse to say."

Miss Dawson's pale eyes gleamed brightly, as a new and welcome vista opened to view. Everyone in Aston Ripley knew that Deryk Lancing and this girl had been brought up together, everyone had been reviving the memory during these last weeks. It seemed that they had behaved very curiously at the ball, though not, perhaps, more curiously than one would expect. . . . An ill-bred boy, who had not been whipped into good manners at school. . . . "Perhaps you thought that you might fare better without going so far," suggested Miss Dawson; then her tone changed. "I'm not going to let my brother be dangled on a string, while young ladies look round the neighbourhood for something better."

Idina bent her head forward until her face was hidden from her tormentor. She had often cried at home during the last few months, but her pride always strengthened her to keep a composed face in her employer's presence. Now she could feel her eyes smarting and her underlip growing unsteady. A moment later she had snatched a handkerchief from her belt and was hurrying from the room. When Miss Dawson rang for tea, she was informed that the girl was no longer in the house. The evening letters would still require attention, but Miss Dawson consoled herself for present inconvenience by thinking how shamefaced her companion would be in the morning and how difficult she would find the walk from Ivy Cottage. Not that she liked giving pain; it had been a disagreeable, upsetting interview, but quite unavoidable; one could not allow this sort of thing to go on, there would be a public scandal, the servants would leave. Miss Dawson was not at all sure that the scandal was not already well afoot. . . .

Idina hurried home sobbing and sobbed alone until she seemed to have exhausted her tears. She could still hardly think of yesterday's interview and Sidney's stammering urgency without a shudder; to have the agony revived and imputed to her for sin was more than she could bear. She did not want him, she had never been more than reasonably polite to him; and this was "unmaidenly." The old-fashioned word, which would have made her smile at another time, stung and stung her again; Miss Dawson had so obviously enjoyed using it. She was being hurt, as she had seen other companions being hurt for years, but of deliberate purpose; she had never believed it possible before, but there was no room for doubt. (At their first interview Miss Dawson had shewn her hand. "You will be here on a business footing; I'm not engaging you out of charity or any sentimental nonsense of that kind.") For the last month she had gone about her work light-heartedly, without thinking of the future. Deryk was home, and nothing mattered; but she could not stand much more of this. Her spirit was being gradually broken, she could be made to cry at will. . . . If only Deryk would come down from London!

She unlocked her father's old despatch-box and tried to comfort herself by reading Deryk's letters once again. They were becoming less regular and more uncommunicative; work here, work there, but no explanation why he was working. She trusted him unhesitatingly, when he said that he could not explain the reason for his sudden departure, but it was all so hard to understand. Old Phillimore, when she met him after service at Ripley Court chapel, understood that Master Deryk was in town buying his equipment before going abroad; Hatherly told her later that Manisty had gone to Hellenopolis alone and that Deryk was still in London. She enquired unreservedly every Sunday evening at the door of the chapel, and Hatherly or Sir Aylmer always gave her the latest tidings with a show of frankness; Deryk was helping Lord Ilkley to catalogue and arrange his collection of Greek pottery; Deryk was at work on a book. . . .

"He seems to be too busy to write much," said Sir Aylmer, with his deep-set eyes fixed steadily away from Idina on the curving lines of the deserted drive.

"Do you expect him down here for Easter?" she asked.

"I can't say," Sir Aylmer answered after a long pause, as he motioned to Benson to wheel him back to the house. "He's very busy at present; then the London season will soon be starting; he may stop up for that."

Idina walked home, puzzling her brains to reconcile Deryk's trouble of mind, when he last spoke to her by telephone, with a self-sought life of journalism and social amusements; there was no intelligible reason why he should make a mystery of what he was doing, though she would be the first to make excuses for him, defend him, admit that his position was exceptional and his time not his own. She had never dreamed of doubting or even questioning him until the evening after Miss Dawson's unkindness, but she depended on him so much that she felt driven to pull at the anchor just to see that it was there. It was hard to write without worrying him, and, whatever happened, he must not think that she was unhappy, or he would be unhappy, too. . . .

"I never have any news for you, Deryk dear," she wrote, "but I love to hear anything of what you are doing. When are you coming home? Time goes dreadfully slowly without you, and, though I got almost used to it when you were abroad, I can't bear to think that you're only forty-five miles away and that I never see you. I met your father on Sunday, and he told me that you were very hard at work. What is it, Deryk? Or oughtn't I to ask? Mr. Hatherly said something about your writing a book; I long to hear about it, but I long much more to see you. Can't you ever get away? You can't imagine how lonely I feel, and your dear letters tell me so little——" Her pen lagged, and she looked out of the window, picturing Deryk's receiving the letter, as she received his, with a tremor of delight and opening it before all the others. He would get it to-morrow—perhaps he was writing to her now, perhaps there would be one for her from him, to read as she walked to the Grange. . . . Her mind came back abruptly to the metalled, white road running without bend or turning from her front gate to Aston Ripley; she was getting so tired of walking it, so tired of being afraid what treatment the day might bring her; really, unless Deryk came back soon, she would have to make a change. . . . "I am trying to screw my courage up to make a change," she continued hurriedly. "For some time I've felt that I don't suit Miss Dawson very well and now I'm sure of it. I must try to get someone else to take me, but I don't want to go away from here, if you're coming back. I'm not feeling very happy to-night, and this is a wretched letter. But then I never shall feel happy till I've got you here. Do you remember the day you came over after you got back? I always look on the stairs, when I come in, to see if you're hiding there. And last night I'd just got into bed, when the telephone rang. Sweetheart, I *knew* it must be you, and it wasn't! Somebody was ringing up Dr. Forsyte, and the wretched girl at the post office had put her on to the wrong number. I could have cried with disappointment!

"Good-bye, Deryk, and bless you. You have all my love for ever, so I can't give you any more."

Two days later she had her reply.

"Dina darling," he wrote, "I see that I shall have to say several things that I never meant you to know. I still think that you'd be wiser just to believe in me and be as patient as you can, but I can tell from your letter that you're unhappy and I must try to explain the position.

"Perhaps you don't know that, though I'm twenty-five, I'm absolutely dependent on my father. I shan't have anything except what he or my trustees allow me till I'm thirty—or even then, if he's still alive. If I wanted to marry, I should have to get his approval: if I married, I should still be at his beck and call. He might tell me to go and live in New York to look after the Trust, and I should have to go. I'm very fond of my father, but he's been ordering people about half his life and doesn't like anybody to have a will of his own. Well, I've got my share of obstinacy and I thought this kind of life wasn't good enough. He'd never have stood it at my age, and I'm not going to stand it either. I decided to do precisely what he'd have done in my place. Without saying anything to him, I came to London to see if I could earn my own living: I've done it for six weeks—far more successfully than I ever thought possible, but I'm pretty nearly dead with work, and anyway six weeks is too short a test. When I've kept afloat for, say, six months, I shall be in a better position to judge whether I've made good.

"I don't know how much you think I love you, Dina, but I can tell you that I love you too well to take any risks, and I won't allow any man or woman alive to interfere with me and tell me what I may or mayn't do. *I have never asked you to marry me;* I never *shall* till I've got something to offer with a little security about it. Till then I leave you absolutely free. I can't tell how long I shall have to wait, I don't know what I shall have to offer at the end of the waiting; it's for you to decide if it's worth while. If you do, Dina, you must put forth all the pluck you've got. I don't see how I can help you; I hate the idea of your spending another day with that venomous old devil, Miss Dawson, but I don't know what else to suggest. I'm carrying as much sail as I can stand and I shall crack up, if I try to do any more.

"Now I've told you everything, and it's all in the strictest confidence. I wouldn't have told you a month ago, because I was too much afraid of failing and I don't like anyone—you, least of all—to see me beaten. It's only a question now whether I can hold on.

"Good-night and bless you, dearest child. Don't imagine that I should be where I am, if I could be with you."

Idina read his letter twice before she understood it, and her first feeling was one of pride tempered by dismay. Then she read it a third time, for it seemed to present Sir Aylmer in a light that was frankly incredible. He had been a chivalrous friend to her—at least, she had received from him more than she had any right to expect; as he said, one had to work out one's own salvation—his whole life was wrapped up in Deryk; yet he would seemingly let his son walk out of the house rather than abate a particle of control over him at home. From her seat in the south transept the following Sunday she watched with new interest, as he stepped out of his chair at the door and walked slowly up the aisle, a gaunt, stooping figure with tightly shut mouth, sunken cheeks and sombre eyes; at any moment he might fall or be found dead in his chair, but, until the end came, there was in every line of his face implacable resolve to hold together the dominion which in the best years of his life he had built out of nothing.

"Wicked man—wickedness committed—lawful and right—souls alive," chirped Mr. Marsham.

Idina could not take her eyes off the tall figure standing at right angles to her. His face was unemotional, it seemed incapable of emotion; infinitely strong, infinitely tired. She was frightened by the thought of Deryk's having to stand up to that inexorable determination; she never entered Ripley Court without breathing an atmosphere of despotism in the silent corridors and vast, empty rooms; the servants were cowed and taciturn. Suddenly, with a scarcely audible sigh, he lowered himself and remained seated until the end of the service. She watched him over the top of her prayer-book, wondering what humility of spirit he could ever bring and what help he would ever deign to ask of his Maker. He sat upright through the prayers, sermon and hymns. At the Benediction he covered his eyes with one bony hand.

"Peace of God—understanding—hearts and minds—knowledge and love—now and f'ev'more."

The organist played the Dresden Amen and modulated into a Steiner out-voluntary. Sir Aylmer waited until the congregation had left and then rose with an effort to his feet. Idina saw him sway, as he turned into the aisle, and hurried to his side; he bowed with a grave smile and leaned crushingly on her shoulder as far as the door.

"I ought not to have come," he murmured, breathing with difficulty, as he stepped into his chair. "I've been feeling rather tired all day."

"Will you let me wheel you into the house?" she asked.

"Oh, I can—" He stopped and leaned back with closed eyes. "I spoke too soon. Would it be troubling you very much?"

She pushed the chair along the flagged path to the side-door by the morning-room, then through the hall into Sir Aylmer's own wing. Hatherly came out of the study, as they approached, and took charge. When last she saw Sir Aylmer, his lips had gone blue and his face a dusty grey. Hatherly, after a quick look, whispered to her that he would be all right in a few minutes, and she retraced her steps through the hall and out of the side door.

The transition from stony resolution to cadaverous helplessness was sudden and frightening. Idina paused by the open door of the chapel to hear the last pealing notes of the organ die away and to consider anew Deryk's irreconcilable pictures of his father and himself. All reason was on one side, and yet she found herself feeling that he was wrong; anyone was wrong to resist a man so ill as Sir Aylmer; his duty was to submit to any terms or impositions that might be made. She could afford to speak strongly, because she was speaking against her own interests. Conceivably Sir Aylmer might not look favourably on herself as Deryk's wife; as the world appraised values, he could make an infinitely better match, and, if need be, she would try to accept the world's valuation. No one would have cause to regret it, if the marriage went forward, but to Deryk it was not worth the sacrifice contemplated.

She turned to look at the great lines of the house against the waning light of the sky. Its size frightened her with all that it implied of wealth, long effort and far-laid plans; it was the material expression of Sir Aylmer Lancing, the shell of personality which would survive him and descend to Deryk and Deryk's son. She had lived so long in its shadow that she had forgotten its size; Deryk was always the boy who had played with her until he went away and returned as the young man who was to fall in love with her; her mind had never seen him as Sir Deryk Lancing, the heir to the Lancing estate, however familiar the phrases might be. She found herself passively helping to break the continuity of two lives; she decided that there could be too great a sacrifice for Deryk to make and force on his father. As she developed the clean-cut, intellectual decision, something else cried out its warning what her action would cost her. Fearful that doubts and compromise would enter in, she hurried back to Ivy Cottage and wrote to Deryk as quickly as her pen would cover the paper, as collectedly, too, as if she were taking down a letter from Miss Dawson's dictation.

"I have been thinking very seriously over what you last wrote. At first I thought that you were right and I loved you for your courage. It must be very hard for anyone like you always to have to do everything as it's arranged for you, but I don't see how it's to be avoided. You see, Deryk, you're not like other people; in a way you're rather like the heir to the throne, and I don't know whether you've considered all that it means to do what you're doing. I'm not speaking of the personal sacrifice, because you must have thought that out, and I don't suppose you started until you'd realised what it would mean to give up Ripley Court and go through life as quite a poor man. But have you thought about your father? Seriously, sweetheart, I feel that it will break his heart, if you quarrel with him: it's quite enough to kill him, and, even if it doesn't, everything that he's hoped and dreamed in life will be wiped out. My dear, I can see the house from where I'm writing. What good is all this gigantic place, if you're never there?

"I can't feel that you know the *size* of what you're doing; certainly I'm sure that I'm not strong enough to take the responsibility of helping. Your father has been kindness itself to me in hundreds of ways, but, even if he hadn't, I shouldn't dare help to make a breach between you. Deryk, you ought to come back at once and make it up with him. You know that I love you and always shall. If you want to marry me, you know you can, darling; but, if your father won't allow it, you must forget all about me. Oh, my sweet Deryk, you can't think how hard it is for me to write like this, but I won't stand in the way of a reconciliation; if you ask him and he refuses, I shall never reproach you. And, what ever happens, you know that no one ever loved anybody as I love you."

She carried the letter to post before sitting down to supper. There was something irrevocable in the hollow sound that it made in falling to the bottom of the box.

3

Idina's letter was one of many awaiting Deryk, when he hurried into the County Club on his way to the opera. The customary reproachful note from Hatherly informed him that Sir Aylmer had undergone another serious attack and ordered him peremptorily back to Ripley Court, if he wished to see his father alive; great emphasis and panic in the first two pages and then a postscript to say that the danger was over for the present. Deryk crushed it into his pocket with an unamiable smile and ordered the morning-room waiter to bring him a whisky and soda, while he tore up cards for the first balls of the season. Everybody seemed to have found that he was in London, everybody was inviting him to lunch, dine, dance, as though he had nothing else in the world to do. He had hardly entered the room before Gerald Deganway fluttered up, swinging his eye-glass and protesting that he never saw Deryk nowadays.

"Now, my dear, you've simply *got* to dine here to-night. No, you're not to make excuses——"

"No time to dine anywhere," Deryk interrupted, gulping his whisky and soda. "I'm due at Covent Garden in six minutes and I mustn't be late."

Deganway looked at his watch, screwed his eye-glass in place and stared at his friend.

"I say, old man, is it really true that you've become one of the world's workers? I believe you have, you know; I'm always hearing of you writing things and doing this and that. I'm going to the opera, too, but I shan't be there for ages and ages. Do tell me why you're doing this! I'm intrigued, positively intrigued!"

Deryk looked at the smiling, rather vacant face, the precarious eye-glass, the pale hair brushed back from the forehead without a parting; then he turned away and set down his empty glass.

"You've made enough mischief already, you and Summertown," he said.

"But *is* it true that you've been turned out—it's not my story, Deryk; I had it from Val Arden, who had it——"

"For the Lord's sake mind your own business, Gerry," exclaimed Deryk. "I've come up here to work for my private satisfaction. I've *not* been turned out of anywhere, and, if everything were true that you and the other liars were saying about me, it would *still* be my business and not yours."

He slipped Idina's letter unopened into his pocket and left the club. He left Deganway also, open-mouthed and affronted, murmuring stiffly, "Liars? I'll thank you not to call me a liar, Deryk." It was really impossible to keep your temper with people like that; they gossiped and grimaced and made mischief and wasted time and dressed exquisitely—and that was about all. And it was just what he could not stand. He would not intentionally insult a man, but fellows like Summertown and Deganway had never got to grips with life, they had done no work, they had never had to do things quickly and creditably when they were tired, there were no boys waiting for their copy, they never switched their brains from one thing to another against time, they never accepted more and more work, knowing that they could never find leisure for it, but afraid—superstitiously afraid—to refuse. At night they never found themselves weaving phrases, instead of sleeping. . . . Dear old George Oakleigh was really no better. With the kindest intentions he was always drawling that the editor of some Midland paper wanted a 'London Letter,' it would only take half an hour to write—as if the day contained a hundred half hours It all brought money, of course. . . . Deryk wondered whether his father had as savagely refused to refuse work in the early New York days. . . .

Covent Garden was crowded, when he arrived, as it was the first night of da Costa's "Esmeralda," which had never been payed in England before. Looking round the house, as the orchestra settled into place, he exchanged bows with Yolande Stornaway, who was with Raymond in the stalls behind him, and with George Oakleigh, who as usual was occupying his uncle's box to the left. Two rows in front of him, Valentine Arden elaborately seated himself in the middle of three empty seats, reserving one on either side for hat and coat and standing up long enough to throw a weary, supercilious glance round the house and to be seen by his friends without having to acknowledge their bows. The Daintons entered under the escort of young Lionel Webster, and on the opposite side he could see Sidney Dawson, an infrequent opera-goer, struggling to dispose of his long legs in comfort. As the overture began, Deryk lay back limply with eyes half-closed, surrendering himself to the music and trying to insulate his senses from the chill of a house which he felt to be unsympathetic. Long after the first curtain fell, he lay still in his trance, and only when his neighbours began to shuffle and talk did he drag himself to his feet and go out in search of coffee and a cigarette.

Outside he found a knot of critics, bandying phrases, or beginning to write their notices, while a slow-moving procession walked to and fro examining the dresses and emitting safe, superior superficialities on the "meretricious waltz-rhythm" and "Guildhall School orchestration." Deganway had just arrived and was considering, with one finger gravely pressed to his forehead, in which box he could most advantageously be seen; Deryk slipped behind him and was looking for a quiet corner to read his letter, when his path was barred by a woman who held out her hand and charged him with forgetting her.

"Cairo, Mr. Lancing?" she suggested.

"Shepheard's Hotel, Mrs. Welman," Deryk responded.

She was a pretty, wistful-looking woman with an amusing tongue and seductive, large, brown eyes. It was said that at one time she had been on the stage and had then married one of the Northumberland Welmans, an elderly, rich invalid, from whom she seemed to live apart. Deryk had classified her as an attractive, rather pathetic foil to a studiedly hilarious, rather vulgar party of twelve, which, under the patronage of Sir Adolf Erckmann set everyone else's nerves on edge. She seemed out of her element and too good for her company, seemed, further, to recognise it and to face life with a hard recklessness, which she was too proud to explain and in which she asked for no sympathy. They had talked long and intimately at a dance eighteen months before, and, when Deryk asked how they could meet again, she had shrugged her shoulders, told him that their paths were unlikely to cross and stirred him surprisingly by abruptly begging him not to believe everything that he might hear about her. For a week he had remembered her very vividly.

"If you're by yourself, I will offer you the privilege of my company," she said. "Sir Adolf's laid up with gout, and I'm all alone in his box. Or, better still, you can rescue me from this dreadful tin-can noise and take me somewhere amusing. But perhaps you think it would not be wise," she added timidly.

"I should love to join you," Deryk answered, "but I've got to see this thing out, I'm afraid. I'm here professionally to-night."

She opened her eyes wide at him in unaffected surprise.

"I hoped it wasn't really, really true," she said. "Lord Summertown told me, of course——"

"Now, what *did* he tell you?" Deryk asked, as she paused.

"Well, I know it's not my business, but I heard you'd quarrelled with your father and been turned out of the house." She looked at him interrogatively. "It's not true? I'm so, so glad. But why are you doing this, if you don't have to?"

"Call it eccentricity," said Deryk carelessly. "I never said I didn't have to. If you want to know, I'm moving Heaven and earth to see how much money I *can* make."

He finished his coffee and went back to her box, where he listened to a lazily drawled commentary on the dresses and history of their neighbours, as she arranged herself and two shapely arms prominently in the front of the box. When the house was thrown into darkness, she leaned towards him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Don't answer this, if you don't want to," she whispered, "but I hope you've not had a—a——" She hesitated for the word.

"Smash?" Deryk suggested. "Oh, Lord! no, thanks very much."

"I'm really, really glad!" She laughed nervously. "I hardly know you, it's nothing to do with me, but I was dreadfully, dreadfully upset. I wondered if there was anything I could do."

She held out her hand, and Deryk pressed it.

"It's most awfully kind of you," he whispered. "As a matter of fact, I, well, I sort of backed myself to earn enough to keep going, just as an experiment, you know, and, as I knew something about music. . . ."

She bent forward, still leaving her hand in his. She had forgotten that he was half American by blood and upbringing, but, of course, the son of an American millionaire always *was* set to work like anyone else.

"What fun!" she exclaimed. "I hope you're winning! Now look here, I believe I really *can* help you. If you can write any sort of song or dance for any of the musical comedies in London, I'll get it placed for you; you know I used to be on the stage? The words won't matter; if you can't write them yourself, I know dozens of people who will; the music's the thing, and everybody's simply mad for a new waltz song——"

"But I've never written a waltz in my life," he objected.

"Well, work up an old hymn-tune. 'Praise the Lord, ye Heavens adore him' makes one of the finest waltzes ever written. If you set 'Abide with Me' to three-time—I'd do it myself, if I knew anything about scoring."

Deryk thought over the proposal.

"I really don't know why you should take all this trouble about me," he said in some embarrassment.

"I really, really don't know why I should!" she answered lightly.

At the end of the opera Deryk invited her to come out to supper with him. Privately he hoped that she would not accept, as he wanted to write his notice and get home to bed; he was also living on a strict daily allowance of money, and supper for two, with a bottle of champagne, would keep him hungry for a month. She refused, telling him first that her husband did not like her to sup in a party of two, subsequently admitting under pressure that this was not her real reason, that it was sweet of him to ask her, but that, if he had to work all day to keep going, she was not going to undo all his work at night.

"You've got to come and dine with me some night at Claridge's," she told him, "just to shew that you're not angry with me for talking like this. Now you ought to go to bed; you're looking tired to death."

It was so long since anyone had spoken to him with her little caress of tone and phrase, so long, too, since he had talked with any woman, that she unsteadied him and he did not want to let her go.

"I wish you'd come," he repeated.

"Find my car for me, like a good boy," she answered, and he was left to return alone to supper at his club.

The long table in the dining-room was crowded, when he came in, so he ordered a mixed grill and went upstairs to write his critique. When he returned, there was a vacant chair next to Raymond Stornaway and opposite Sidney Dawson, who seemed to be elaborating an exhaustive comparison of ancient and modern opera.

"Again, in the old days——" Deryk heard him say.

"Yolande tells me you *know* about these things," Raymond intervened, turning with relief to Deryk. "What did you think of it? Or perhaps you were too much occupied in other ways."

"I heard all I wanted," Deryk answered, as he began his supper. It was not Raymond's business if he chose to sit in Mrs. Welman's box, and, though no harm had been intended by the words, harm might come, if they were misunderstood. In Cairo he had been solemnly warned by Hatherly that he was playing with fire—whatever that might mean; he had bitter reason to know the nightmare way in which unfounded stories spread; with Dawson sitting there listening with ears strained and eyes bulging out of his head, he could count on some lie reaching Aston

Ripley, as it was probably now being circulated by Deganway in the smoking-room. None of these fellows knew anything about the woman. . . .

"I've known Mrs. Welman for some years," he added.

"I've known her for some time, too," said Raymond. "I don't know that I should be seen about with her overmuch, all the same. You're not her match."

Having had no mother for the greater part of his life and being brought up among single men, Deryk was shy with women and disposed to idealise them. Raymond's worldly tone grated on him.

"I know nothing about her," he said shortly.

"I do," answered Raymond, unabashed by the tone. "She's a collector; I've known her on and off for ten years, first as a dress-maker of a kind, intermittently an actress and always a collector. She's collected Harry Welman, she's collected that fellow Erckmann and she'll collect you, if you're not careful."

Deryk was silent for fear of being rude. As soon as he had finished supper, he walked home to Great Ormonde Street, leaving Raymond to return reluctantly for a late sitting, and prepared for bed. As he undressed, he discovered Idina's letter in his pocket and opened it. In his overtired state it added the last touch of irritation to nerves which had first been set tingling by Deganway and kept tingling by Raymond.

"Oh, do for heaven's sake leave the past alone," he began in reply. "You may be quite sure that I thought all this out before I started. You don't come on to the screen at all, Dina; I've never mentioned your name to the guv'nor and I really know so little of what goes on inside his head that I've no idea what he'd say, if I did. That's my difficulty with him. He sits like a wizard, and I never know what it's all about, and so he'll try to go on all his life. It might be different, if I'd ever come a cropper, but I haven't and I'm not going to be dictated to. Well, one of us had to give in, and it wasn't going to be me. It's not the least use talking about sacrifices, nor about heirs to thrones. They can always abdicate, and that's just what I've done. As for splitting the family, he can have me back as easily as pressing a button.

"Dina, I'm really too tired to argue any more. You're a perfectly free agent, you can do what you like, I won't fetter you in any way. But, if you died to-morrow or eloped with Hatherly, it wouldn't make a pennyworth of difference. I should go on just as I'm going till I'd established my own independence. At least, the only difference it would make would be this; if I thought that you'd have married me and that my father had kept us apart, I'd never speak to him again in this world or the next. Don't make things harder for me, darling."

He signed his name and read through the letter. She would expect more endearment than the one belated "darling," and he added a postscript. "Bless you, sweetheart! When I can't sleep and things seem more than I can bear, I think of the wonderful moment when I talked about going away and you looked at me with two great big blue eyes filled with tears and whispered that you didn't want me to go. I shall never forget you as you were then, with the moon shining in on you and your poor little baby mouth all trembling. Good-night, darling. Bless you always."

He was heavy-eyed when the letter was done, and the sheets struck cool and refreshing to his tired body. For an hour he lay waiting for the over-active brain to grow drowsy, but all his pulses were beating like hammers, and he turned restlessly from side to side. After a spell of counting to a thousand and repeating scraps of poetry, he threw aside the bedclothes and fetched himself pencils and paper. Mrs. Welman's suggestion had come into his mind, and he amused himself by writing the piano part of a waltz adapted from "Abide with Me;" "Lead, Kindly Light" was next attempted, but he felt too lazy to undertake the full score, and the unaided piano part was thin and inadequate.

By three o'clock his eyes ached too much to let him work longer, and he put on trousers, overcoat and boots and set out in search of exercise and fresh air. But for a few scavengers in oilskins and waders he had the streets to himself until he reached Covent Garden, where he stood for a few minutes watching the fruit and vegetable carts unloading. The Strand was deserted, but unkempt men lay huddled under the Adelphi Arches, and the Embankment, as ever, offered its meagre hospitality to the outcasts rejected of every other part. By the Boadicea group he hoisted himself on to the parapet and sat watching the water swirling and parting at the piles of the bridge. Black and Silver had been his father's racing colours, and, as he looked down, he began to think again of Idina's letter and his own reply. . . . A policeman approached and took up his stand a few yards away. "I'm not contemplating suicide," Deryk called out to him. The man laughed, murmured something in return and moved to the other side of the bridge. Deryk waited on till the wind struck cold through his light clothes, then jumped down and walked towards St. James' Park. The light in the Clock Tower was burning, and from time to time a taxi drove away from the House (he flushed with anger at the memory of Raymond's impertinence at supper); otherwise the streets were once more deserted.

Half-way across the Horse Guards Parade he filled a pipe and felt in his pockets for a match. Finding none, he hurried in pursuit of a man who was walking in evening dress towards the Duke of York's Steps, smoking a cigar and swinging his cane. He had hardly got out the first words of his request, when he discovered his companion to be Sidney Dawson.

"I thought we both went home to bed about four hours ago!" exclaimed Deryk.

"I couldn't sleep," Dawson explained wearily. Then his eyes rested for a moment on the bare head and muffled throat beside him. "Couldn't you either? I wonder if it was anything we had at supper. Of course, my doctor tells me I oughtn't to look at supper, but, when you've had a hurried dinner at about seven, you want something later on, I'm sure."

Deryk fell into step beside him, and they walked side by side up the steps.

"I was just restless," he said. "I don't mind, but it makes you feel so rotten next day."

"You oughtn't to be troubled at your age," said Dawson with bluff heartiness. "I remember in the old days we used to think nothing of staying up three nights running. There was a place in Covent Garden—Betterley, Boddiley? I don't recall the name—it always kept open later than anywhere else, and after leaving the Formosa—that was the great night club of those days, you know—the fashionable thing was to breakfast off kidneys and beer at—I wish I could remember the name. I remember once dear old Bertie Selwyn—he became Lord Stoneleigh afterwards and was killed at Aintree, trying to ride the National when any one of us could have certified that he hadn't been sober. . . . Let me see, I forget where I'd got to. Oh, about Bertie Selwyn. Yes. There was Bertie and me and a third man—it may have been Dick Harley or it may not; it's of no consequence either way—we'd been seen at least three mornings in succession breakfasting at that place, and Chris Ferguson bet us a pony that we couldn't keep it up for a week. Well, we won the bet, but not one of us would go through it again for ten times the money. When Saturday morning came——"

He chuckled wickedly to himself and threw up his hands into the air.

"They say insomnia doesn't hurt you, if you don't worry about it," said Deryk, shovelling a surreptitious spadeful of earth on to the grave of Dawson's story.

"But it's so hard not to worry," Dawson objected. "I need all the sleep I can get. My doctor keeps me on a very strict diet—between ourselves, Lancing, I don't believe I ever get enough to eat—if you take to-day, I breakfasted off a piece of dry toast and one cup of weak tea; or lunch——"

Deryk began to edge away towards the Haymarket.

"You probably don't get enough fresh air," he suggested.

"My dear fellow, every morning at eleven——"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," Deryk interrupted hastily. "I don't know enough about your case. And I'm certainly not in a position to lecture other people. Good-night, Mr. Dawson; I really must try to get some sleep on my own account."

While Deryk hurried home, Dawson sauntered discontentedly along Pall Mall into St. James' Street. It was his boast that he never slept more than three hours a night, but he would never have confirmed the boast on oath, and one night's serious insomnia stood out black-figured in his calendar. Since his precipitate return from Aston Ripley, he had been ceaselessly reproaching himself with having mismanaged the whole proposal. He had taken the girl by surprise; he had entirely failed to present his case or to shew her what it would mean to be mistress of the Grange and the house in Eaton Square, to lounge away a winter abroad, when she felt inclined, to walk into shops and carry away whatever attracted her whim. . . . There was a difference of age, but he had not explained how little other difference that would make; she would have her own friends, he would never enquire how she passed her time. Anything that adoration and an income of seven thousand a year could give her was hers; in return he only asked for a little affection and the sweetness of her bodily presence in the house. He had never before felt that he needed anything so badly: she must not, could not, refuse. . . .

The arguments swept into his brain, ready phrased, as they had signally failed to do when he stood stammering and repeating himself before her. Well, he had refused to take "no" for an answer and he meant it. To-morrow he would tell her so again—or perhaps the next day. To-morrow, after his broken night, he would not be adequately convincing. But he would go down to the Grange next day, sleep in the country air and the following morning—Well, it would be no good her trying to refuse him again; he would not take another refusal.

His overnight valour was unabated when he sent his man out with a telegram for his sister. It was improving under steady rehearsal when he arrived half an hour before dinner and strode with an air of dominion into the drawing-room.

"We're becoming quite a jack-in-the-box," commented Miss Dawson fretfully, as she roused from slumber. "Are you staying the night, Sidney, or what?"

"You remind me of something I once heard at a music-hall," he answered with the laugh that heralded an anecdote. "That man—you know, the funny fellow; I can't remember his name—he was asked by the indignant mother, 'Are you going to marry my daughter or what?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I'm one of the what-ers.' Rather good, eh?" He laughed immoderately, repeating to himself ". . . marry the girl or what? Oh, I'm one of the what-ers."

Miss Dawson turned to him with carefully assumed drowsiness.

"Have you come here after that Penrose girl, Sidney?" she asked.

Her brother suddenly ceased to laugh and faced his sister with lofty dignity.

"My dear, I feel that we should get on much better, if you minded your own business and left me to mind mine."

"Tantrums!" ejaculated Miss Dawson with a chuckle. Then her face became solemn. "Of course, it *is* your business, and, though I am your sister, I learned long ago not to expect you to listen to me. You never do, no one ever does till it's too late. Then you come like a whipped cur and say, 'You were right, Adeline; if only I'd followed your advice!' " The scene was idealised, but Miss Dawson had painted it so often that to her eyes at least it was faithful. "You won't listen to me, but will you listen to anyone else?"

Sidney picked up the evening paper and hid himself behind it, only condescending to say,

"I decline to discuss my private affairs with anyone."

Miss Dawson was not to be deterred. Long experience had taught her that no man or woman was ever so engrossed in book or paper as to miss all the points of an oblique monologue.

"Of course, you think it's all nonsense," she began in a comfortable, irrepressible voice. "Perhaps you wouldn't think so, if ever you'd been present. Now, when I took your glove to Madame Christine——" "The Westminster Gazette" flapped indignantly. "Oh, we're very wise and clever, but I—tell—you—that your friend Charles Englefield, *who'd been in his grave fifteen years. . . .*"

Sidney Dawson deliberately folded his paper, placed it under one arm and walked to the door.

"Time to dress," he muttered.

"Charles Englefield warned me that you were going to make a fool of yourself!" cried Miss Dawson shrilly.

The door slammed.

4

Throughout the night following her letter to Deryk, Idina lay thinking of her loss; in the morning, as she walked through the rain to the Dawsons' house, she began to think once more of the future. Wonderfully little comfort came to her from the sense that she had done right; wonderfully little consolation that would bring her in the endless future. The shabby, rambling house, in long need of decoration; the airless, over-furnished rooms, with their ponderous mahogany, their purposeless overmantels, their massive pictures and museum of tasteless ornaments; the garden, which no one replenished and for which no one cared; all exhaled a heavy air of decay, as though the cunningly preserved life of an elder generation were giving out in despite of every caution and artifice. And her function was to arrest the decay; for her all existence was a long ministration to elder generations, as they gradually weakened and died. And she was filled with a fiercely rebellious wish to have a life of her own instead of dancing as a familiar shadow in the background of others' lives.

For three days she went about her work stolid and insensible, winning a certain pleasure from facing the conditions of her life steadily, telling herself that they would never change. An impatient word from Miss Dawson was received with outward placidity and stored in the armoury of self-mortification. She no longer flushed or grew tremulously nervous when her employer spoke with silken brutality; after turning her back on Deryk, she was hardly to notice what anyone else could do to her. For three days she submitted with a smilingly sullen air to her self-chosen fate, like a wilful child obeying a hateful order.

Then Deryk's letter arrived, and her ill-worn stoicism fell from her. She had made the effort, her sacrifice was rejected, and she could resist no more. "If you died to-morrow or eloped with Hatherly, it wouldn't make a pennyworth of difference." It was not very complimentary of him to relegate her so frankly to the second place, but at least he had taken all responsibility from her shoulders, and nothing that she did or refrained from doing would change his attitude towards his father; she was no longer prejudicing his interests or making ill return for Sir Aylmer's generosity.

On reaching the Grange she was greeted by Miss Dawson with the words,

"My brother arrived last night. I hope that you will remember what I was compelled to say to you the other day."

Idina set about her work without answering. If anything could make her marry Sidney, it would be the pleasure of revenging herself on his sister, and this sense of exhilarating animosity kept her undefeated throughout the morning. At one o'clock she had a moment's uneasy fear that she would be invited to stay to luncheon and kept under conscious observation for Miss Dawson's amusement. She was allowed to go home unmolested, however, and Sidney had the consideration to remain hidden from view at teatime. So long as this tactful disposition was maintained, Idina anticipated no trouble; and at seven o'clock she hurried home to answer Deryk's letter. Hardly looking where she was going, she had run to the lodge gate before a concealed figure emerged from the shadow of the wall and gave her pause.

"I hope you will not forbid me the pleasure of accompanying you home," said Sidney.

Idina made pretence of consulting her watch.

"I'm in an awful hurry," she said. "I've got letters to write before the post goes."

"I expect I can keep up," he answered with a laugh, breaking into stride, stiff and erect, beside her. "Miss Penrose, I told you the other day that I wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. I hope you understood that I meant it."

Idina stopped and faced him with pleading eyes.

"I *beg* you not to ask me again!" she implored. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world, but my answer will always be the same. Why can't we just go on being friends, why will you——?"

"Because I want something much more than that," he answered easily. "Look here, Idina—I'm not going to ask leave to call you that!—when I talked to you the other night, I took you by surprise. What you've got to do is to think quite calmly over what I'm proposing——"

He broke up her attitude of supplication by turning and walking down the road, inviting her with a gesture to come with him.

"I honestly never thought that I should ask anyone to marry me—until I met you," he began, with a mixture of boastfulness and graceful, necessary surrender. "But, when I found you grown up into a woman——"

With the good-humour of perfect assurance he unhurriedly delivered himself of the speeches which he had been rehearsing since their last meeting; the offer was presented in all its attractivness—independence, wealth, a life that would be whatever she chose to make it, the worship and service of a devoted husband; and, in return, a smile of affection. The case to be argued was so strong in itself that he spoke almost disinterestedly, as though counselling her for her own and another man's sake. Was it so hard for her of all people, with her warm, kindly heart, to spare him a corner of it? God knows, he was not vain enough to have any illusions left about himself, but she would find him infinitely affectionate, obedient to her wishes. . . . He was amazed at the range of his own domestic virtues. . . . they were barely exhausted when he found himself opposite the gate of Ivy Cottage.

Idina looked reflectively at his thin, over-spruce figure and carefully chosen clothes. As he stood, hat in hand, his carefully brushed hair had not even begun to change its colour; his complexion was unwholesome, but his face had kept its shape and was not unduly lined. She could not say of any one feature that it spoiled the cherished illusion, but something faded and worn, something old and tired under the strutting exterior refused to be hidden for all his efforts. He was like an old actor playing a boy's part with a fire and activity that yet somehow failed to compensate a poor make-up.

"I can't change what I've said," she told him, lowering her eyes.

"I've told you I won't take that for an answer," he laughed.

"But you really must. And, oh, please! please don't talk to me about this again! If you knew how miserable it made me feel——"

Sidney's voice became low and caressing.

"Why won't you marry me, Idina?" he asked.

"I don't love you! I—I hardly know you," she added, trying to soften the effect of the first words.

"But I've not asked you to love me," he whispered. "I've done nothing to deserve it, I don't know why you should. I want you to let me take care of you and make you as happy as you have a right to be. Then—then! Well, *then,* if you found you were getting just the least little bit fond of me——"

Idina gave a quick shake of the head and held out her hand to him.

"I can't," she said. "It's no good, and you only make me feel an ungrateful beast. . . . Good-bye; and *please* don't—you know—again."

He took her hand and raised it with an elaborate gesture to his lips, despite a perceptible pull against him.

"You say you hardly know me!" he cried with the same unquenchable gaiety he had adopted throughout their time together. "Idina, your most devoted servant. I shall be down here for some time, and it will be my exquisite privilege to make myself better known to you."

He released her hand and, with a bow from the waist, walked towards the Grange. Idina hurried indoors and turned the key for fear he should come back. The light, dashing manner in courtship was but one degree less discomposing than the tragic vein of their first encounter; what his next mood was likely to be she had no means of guessing, but he was apparently determined to renew his addresses at alarmingly short intervals until she accepted him or married someone else or ran away from Aston Ripley and went into hiding. He was incapable of taking her at her word. . . . It was persecution. . . .

From a mood of pity and terrified embarrassment she found herself passing to one of indignation. Then she began to wonder longingly how soon she could silence him by announcing her engagement to Deryk. As soon as he was ready for her, of course, she would come to him: the sooner the better: the moment that he was making enough money to put a roof over their heads and prove his independence of Sir Aylmer: to-morrow: to-day. . . . She laughed at her own impatience, but her knees were still trembling from the nervous excitement of the last encounter. She could at least tell Deryk that she would share his hardships and struggles with him, that she could help him, work for him, that she did not want luxury, that she only wanted to be with him. . . .

Going to the writing-table she read his letter once again.

"Darling Deryk," she wrote in reply. "I won't argue; I don't want to; I'm much too happy to do anything except say, 'Bless you, and best of luck;' I know your father will come round to your view when you shew him that you can get on without him, because, you see, Deryk, he can't get on without you. Perhaps he's not the only one! Oh, dearest, I do so badly want to see you! It's not to argue or make things harder: perhaps it may make things just the weeniest bit easier, but you're the person to judge that. Don't you think you could come down just for a few hours? I could go on and on for years, if I just saw you once again, but there's something I must say, and I somehow feel that I can't put it in a letter."

There was a delay of three days before Deryk wrote again, and his letter told her a little impatiently that he was unable to spare even half a day from his work. Idina pouted, as she read; Deryk and she had not set eyes on each other since the night of the ball, and she could not help feeling that, if he really wanted to see her, he could *make* time: he seemed to subordinate her entirely to his general war of independence. . . . In the three days Sidney Dawson had proposed twice more, with the gay assurance of a man who could afford to wait and knew that waiting would bring him all that he desired. Idina took to escaping through the orchard of the Grange and moving in cover to Ivy Cottage through the park of Ripley Court, but, after eluding him once, she was to find him the next night mounting guard over the gate of her garden and barring her way to the house until he had discharged his latest proposal.

The following day she asked Miss Dawson for leave of absence for a few hours. As Deryk would not come to her, she telegraphed to say that she was on her way to London and would meet him at the County Club. The feeling that she would not come up from Aston Ripley without good cause quelled his tendency to grumble at the loss of essential time. They dined early at a restaurant in Soho, and Idina with some trepidation told him of Sidney's proposal. The account was made as colourless as possible, and she felt that she was perhaps unwarrantably betraying a confidence, but it seemed only fair for Deryk to know, and she had an idea that a girl in her position always *did* tell. Deryk was so much infuriated that she cut her story short at the first proposal.

"I hope you let him have it between the eyes," he fumed. "It's an insult! A doddering, broken-down——"

"Don't abuse him, Deryk," she begged. "He—he *meant* to be kind."

"It's the damnedest insolence I've ever heard of! A man with one foot in the grave, a fellow who wears *stays*, having the presumption to come and ask *you*—what did you tell him, Dina?"

"Oh, I said it was impossible."

Deryk breathed heavily.

"I should dam' well think it was. So *that's* what's been worrying you?" he went on more gently.

"Yes, partly. He's still down there, Deryk; if—if he says anything again?"

"Give him a back-hander across the mouth," he suggested. "But, if you told him off properly, he'll keep out of the way."

"I don't believe he will," she murmured; then, deciding to let Deryk know everything, "It wasn't only *once*. . . ."

"You mean that you let him——?"

"I can't *help* it, Deryk!" she cried in distress. "I've told him again and again, but he just laughs and comes back. What am I to say? I—I—I—He makes me afraid to put my nose out of doors! Can't you——?"

"Can't I what?"

"Can't *you* do something? Can't you tell him that we—oh, Deryk, how much longer are you going to wait? You've surely been going on long enough to prove what you can do. Why can't we start now—I don't care how much of a struggle it is, I could help you, we should win through, I know we should!"

Deryk's expression hardened.

"It's out of the question," he told her. "On two months? And such luck as not one man in a thousand ever gets? I'm quoting George Oakleigh; he frankly says that it's not a fair test. Why, it's lunacy! If I fell ill and had to chuck work for a few weeks, you'd hardly have enough to live on."

"I wouldn't mind that, Deryk."

"Perhaps you would when you'd tried it." He found it difficult to speak patiently or with kindness so long as she failed to recognise how hard he had been compelled to work and how precarious his victory still was. Women were so amazingly unpractical. She seemed to think that love and a blind readiness to face risks hand in hand somehow made the risks less great. "There's nothing to be done yet awhile," he added. "In four months I propose to see my father, but I shan't have enough powder and shot till then."

Idina looked at her watch and began to draw on her gloves, thankful that she had a train to catch. Deryk had wounded her again and again in their short time together. Instead of protecting her from Sidney's solicitations, he seemed to think that it was all her fault for not speaking decisively enough; instead of being made glad by her offer to share his life, however little he had to give her, he dismissed the offer as a piece of lunacy. More strongly than ever before she felt that Deryk was absorbed first and last in an obstinate struggle with his father and that she was but incidental to it, perhaps superfluous.

"You haven't helped me very much," she sighed, laying her hand on his sleeve, as they drove to Victoria.

"What can I do, darling?" he asked. The strip of mirror reflected his face, as he leaned over to kiss her, and he marvelled afresh that there was no outward trace of the sleepless nights and restless, nervous days through which he had passed. His eyes were burning, and the back of his head and neck felt bruised. "*I* can't dictate to Dawson what he's to say to you. I haven't the right."

"I'd give you the right," she whispered.

He drew back involuntarily, wondering how long he would be able to resist the temptation. He knew that he did right in not going near Aston Ripley; only when he was working and at a distance could he be sure of himself.

"Not until I'm in a state to receive it," he answered, withdrawing his hand. "I *can't,* Dina; surely you must see? No man's justified in tying a girl to him till he sees reasonable likelihood of being able to support her; I tell you quite deliberately that I'm not in sight of that yet. It—it doesn't make things any easier, you know, if we're not patient."

Idina bit her lip and said nothing. As the taxi drove into Victoria, she asked herself what good she had done, what good she ever thought she could do. When he had found her a carriage, they stood talking until the guard ordered her inside and slammed the door; as the train began to move, she leaned out and whispered, "Good-bye, darling; you do love me a little bit, don't you?"

Deryk laughed and waved good-bye.

"Just a little bit," he cried. Then he turned and made his way back to his rooms; the interview had cost him three hours' work. . . .

In the week following her return from London, Idina received two more proposals from Sidney. Determined that Deryk should have no justification for thinking that she was to blame for their continuance, she stood her ground and reminded the importunate suitor of his previous proposals, her invariable refusal and equally invariable request not to have the proposal repeated; she then asked him whether it was chivalrous to press unwelcome attentions on one who was in a position of dependence. Sidney was put out of countenance by her use of the word "chivalrous;" he had imagined himself a very Bayard to her and was galled by her insistence on regarding him as a persecutor. After a few moments, however, his assurance returned, and he told her that it was the right and duty of every man to offer himself, his service, all that he had or was, to the woman whom he loved. Thereafter Idina enjoyed four days' respite.

As she came and went and moved about the house, however, Sidney's eyes followed her, until she had an uncomfortable sense that he was mentally undressing her; he methodically transferred himself from one room to another a quarter of an hour after she had moved, as though to pursue some fragrance of her person, but he no longer lay in wait for her, no longer declaimed his set speeches. Idina scored a double advantage by the change; not only was she free of his embarrassing attentions, but Miss Dawson neither dared nor cared to be spiteful in her brother's presence. For four days—the only four days since she came to the Grange—Idina began her work without foreboding and ended it without having been made to suffer. On the fifth day Sidney left the drawing-room immediately after tea and was waiting for her half-way down the drive.

"You can guess what brings me here?" he began.

"I hoped that you were not going to discuss this again," she answered, feeling her heart involuntarily quicken its beat.

"You can hardly have expected it, dear lady. You have only to see yourself as I see you——"

Idina faced him with the same steadiness as on the last occasion.

"Mr. Dawson, either you must promise never to re-open this discussion, or I must go away. I don't want to do that, it is very inconvenient, very hard. . . . But I shall do it if you force me to. Will you promise?"

"I cannot, Idina. Egad! I should be a poor lover if I let myself be discouraged into a promise of that kind."

Idina turned and hurried down the drive.

"Then I shall go away!"

"Sweet child, I shall follow you!"

She looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"Don't you care for me—you *say* you do—don't you care for me enough to leave me alone, when I ask you to?"

The falsetto gaiety died out of Sidney's manner.

"I care for you so much that I *can't* leave you alone!" he cried. In the haggard face and hungry eyes the girl traced for the first time a passion which his mock-debonair gaiety was unable to hide. She was filled with pity and fear in equal measure; for the first time she understood that, though his brain might take in a refusal, the rest of him never had and never would; her words were simply words; so would Deryk's have been, if she had succeeded in winning his intervention. Without conscious thought she appreciated that the only way of dealing with the physical hunger and infatuation in his eyes was to escape from his reach.

"I'll go away for a week," he said with a return of his old jauntiness. "It's not to be hoped that you'll miss me, but you'll have time to think over what *you're* throwing away with such bewitching obstinacy. And, when I come back, I hope you'll know how to deal with a poor devil whose only wish is to make you happy and whose only fault is that he's fallen head over ears in love with you. *Au revoir,* little lady; we meet in a week's time."

With a last gallant smile and a kiss of her finger-tips he turned back towards his own house. As he walked moodily through the garden, the prospect of dining alone with his sister and under her watchful, malicious eyes was more than he could bear; he wandered, hardly looking where he was going, out of his own grounds and through the woods of Ripley Court into the park. There must be a right way of approaching the girl, but he had so far failed to find it; he had to find it now; girls in her dependent position, unbroken to their work and disliking it, did not as a rule throw away what he was offering. It was not a question of age or appearance; he was quite comfortable on that score; she was not already engaged and could have no opportunity of indulging romantic dreams. For the hundredth time he told himself that it was inexperience and want of imagination; she did not know, she did not *know* the life of clothes and jewels, parties and theatres, everything that girls cared for, that he was preparing for her. He had not interested her yet. . . .

His feet were on rising ground, and he looked up to find himself mounting the knoll opposite Ivy Cottage. He had no idea of the time, but lights were shining through the unblinded windows, and he could see Idina finishing her supper and getting up to clear the table. That she should have to lay and clear her own table! She was lost to view for a time, but reappeared and sat down to write letters. Half an hour, an hour later she came out bare-headed and ran down to the pillar-box by the west lodge gate of Ripley Court. He waited, sitting on a fallen trunk, until she came up the hill again and disappeared inside the house. The door was bolted, the blind drawn and the lights turned out downstairs; a moment later the dark front of the house was again broken by two yellow squares, Idina appeared in sight for a moment and pulled the curtains. For ten minutes he watched her shadow moving up and down; her arms were joined above her head, and she was seen to be brushing her hair; then the lights upstairs vanished abruptly. Careless of the dew, he sat on wondering why the two of them should live apart, separated by a few yards, when each was essential to the other's happiness. He pictured her lying with her wonderful flaxen hair loose on the pillow, her cheeks warmly flushed, smiling in her sleep—alone and wasted, when he would give ten years of his life to kiss her lips once. . . .

The sound of men's voices and the ring of feet on the road broke into his reverie; he awoke to find himself cramped and shivering and, peering at his watch in the moonlight, was amazed to find that the time was after two. He stumbled out of the plantation and was twenty yards down the road, when he found himself face to face with the two men whose voices he had heard.

"He'll be all right, when you've given him the stuff I'm going to make up," one was saying. "As right as he ever is."

Sidney recognised the village doctor from Aston Ripley.

"Good-night, Forsyte," he mumbled.

"Is that Dawson?" enquired the doctor, stopping short. "I say, your sister's been telephoning round for you; wanted to know if you were dining with me. I said I hadn't the honour. She seemed to be expecting you."

"She rang us up, too," said Hatherly, coming forward. "I said I hadn't seen you for some time."

"I've only been having a walk," said Sidney with some impatience.

"She just seemed a bit nervous," Hatherly remarked. "Well, we must be getting on. Good-night, Dawson."

"Good-night, good-night!" he answered. "I hope Forsyte's not a bird of ill-omen," he went on to Hatherly. "Nothing serious? Good."

He marched stiffly erect into the night, while the other two hurried on towards the doctor's house.

"Has he been serenading the fair Miss Penrose, do you imagine?" asked Forsyte with a smile. "He's got it rather badly, everyone tells me."

"Men of that age do," said Hatherly. "Well, she might do worse."

Forsyte was professionally silent; if Sidney Dawson were going the way of his sister, his father and his grandfather, he could not look forward to many years of health: he ought not to dream of asking any girl to marry a man who would spend the rest of his life as an invalid.

5

Her last interview with Dawson and the uncertainty of her future at Deryk's hands forced Idina to act on her own initiative. She wrote to her former employment bureau in Regent Street for particulars of vacant situations for companions, secretaries or governesses, enclosing the usual booking-fee and submitting her qualifications. She had a week in which to look round before Sidney returned and, if need be, she was prepared to forego a month's salary in order to get away. However disheartening the new prospect, she could no longer subject herself to thrice weekly proposals, alternating with short absences on Sidney's part in which Miss Dawson vented the sarcasms which her brother's presence had held in check.

She found Miss Dawson next morning seated as usual beside a bright fire in the morning-room, with her letters and paper-knife before her and a waste-paper basket by her foot-stool. There was no reply to Idina's "good-morning" and the girl busied herself with arranging the writing-table and preparing for the day's dictation. A quarter of an hour passed before Miss Dawson seemed aware of her presence; then, without speaking, she held out an envelope. Idina took it and found inside a cheque for one month's salary.

"But you've paid me already," she said.

"If we look, we shall see it's for the present month," said Miss Dawson. "It is not expected that this kind of thing can go on, surely."

Idina stared from the cheque to her employer: some moments passed before she realised that she was being dismissed.

"When do you wish me to go?" she asked quietly.

Miss Dawson turned to her with brightly gleaming eyes.

"We've not a word to say? Perhaps we're wise. But no regret, no attempt to draw back——?"

"I don't know why you're getting rid of me," said Idina, "but I suppose you're quite within your rights. I've done my best, but I told you, when you engaged me, that I'd no experience——"

Miss Dawson dammed the deferential stream.

"Do you think I don't know all about you?" she cried. "Do you think I haven't eyes in my head to see the way you've been going on? He'd never have done it, if you hadn't led him on; he's not that kind of man."

Idina folded the cheque and slipped it into her belt.

"When do you wish me to go?" she repeated.

"You thought nobody saw, nobody cared," went on Miss Dawson. "It seems the whole village was talking about you. My own servants—d'you think they don't know when their master goes out at seven and has to be let in at three next morning?"

Idina flushed scarlet, as Miss Dawson's meaning became clear to her.

"How dare you?" she cried. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself——"

"For finding out?" The old woman's voice rose shrilly, malice blending with indignation. "We ought to have been more circumspect. People saw him going out, people saw him coming away, people saw him being let in. He wouldn't marry us for all our plans, so we thought we'd *make* him." Her voice lost its last trace of moral indignation and became triumphant. "Well, he won't! You're not the first or the second," she cried inconsistently. "Sidney's always been a favourite, but he never married any of them and he won't marry you. No man would, after you've shewn yourself in your true colours; it would be their turn to-day and someone else's to-morrow. So I told him, quite plainly. Oh, he pretended to be angry, but he knew I was right."

Idina was crying with long, quivering sobs of amazement and horror. The old woman looked at her for a moment in the heady sensual enjoyment of causing pain.

"Crying won't undo it," she observed at length.

The girl steadied herself and walked slowly up to the old woman's chair.

"You dirty, wicked old wretch!" she cried, throwing self-control to the winds. "It's a lie, a lie, a lie! D'you hear? You're lying! You know you're lying!" Miss Dawson leaned out of her chair and pulled the bell. Idina steadied herself involuntarily. "I'd kill you if I could, you horrible, dirty-minded——"

Her voice broke, and she hurried from the room. Without waiting to get her hat or coat on she ran down the drive and never stopped until she was back in Ivy Cottage. The woman who came in each morning to clean the house knew better than to ask questions, but Idina explained with a composure that surprised herself that she had to go suddenly to London and might not be back for some days. One of her father's suitcases held all the clothes that she would require, and, laden with this, she made her way to the station in time to catch the mid-day train. An unexpected dry sob still shook her from time to time. and in her loneliness she thought for a moment of asking Deryk to meet her; she knew, however, that he would be busy, and there was no need to see him until her plans were less disordered. Instead, she addressed a note to the County Club, telling him that she had left Miss Dawson and was looking for employment elsewhere. On reaching Victoria she went at once to the bureau in Regent Street, but her letter had only been received a few hours before, and she was told to come back in two days' time. A clerk mechanically noted that she had left her previous employment because she desired a change; the old particulars of age, experience and salary were once more entered; and she was free to look for lodgings.

As soon as she had an address for letters, she wrote again to Deryk and begged him to arrange a meeting. He found both letters at his club that night and invited her to lunch with him next day. It was a relief to hear that she had at last broken free of Miss Dawson's persecution and escaped the no less galling persecution of Sidney; he was disturbed, however, by the prospect of her having to secure a new position. As both of them knew, she had few qualifications to offer and, though he had made enough money to keep her for several months, he did not want to break unduly into his slowly accumulated capital.

"What exactly are you going to do?" he asked uneasily, as they sat down to luncheon.

"I must take anything I can get," she answered slowly, "unless——"

"Well?"

She leaned across the table with her eyes set pleadingly on his.

"Deryk, why must we wait?" she whispered. "I've told you I don't mind *how* poor we are to start with——"

"It's no good!" His eyebrows met in a determined frown, and his mouth stiffened. A similar expression was well known in certain parts of New York a generation earlier; Hatherly and Raymond still saw it in its enfeebled age and were wont to shrug their shoulders and acquiesce when it appeared. Gwendolen Lancing had been compelled to recognise it from the first and with it a certain hardness and contempt for women; and her recognition of it had killed something within her. "I've gone into it, and you haven't, old girl," he went on, clumsily patting her hand. "When you see what a jolly little way money goes——"

"I *have* seen, Deryk," she interrupted obstinately. "I couldn't help seeing, when father died."

"Well, I'm not going forward till I know the ground's solid under me," he rejoined.

Idina sighed and turned the sigh into a not very convincing laugh.

"I don't believe you really want me a bit," she said. "You'd get on quite well without me."

Deryk continued his meal for some moments without speaking. Than he remarked carelessly,

"I don't think that's you at your best, Dina."

"Well, you said, if I died or eloped, you'd go on just the same." She had never forgotten the maladroit want of affection in the phrase; it had set her doubting whether he loved her at all, and, now that she was unstrung and hungry for a caress of voice or hand, the words came back to sting her. "If you really cared for me, it would make a difference to *whatever* you did: it *would* make a difference, if I died;" she ignored his gesture; "it *would* make a difference if I didn't marry you."

She broke off with a pout and sat staring at her plate. Deryk could feel his patience ebbing, as it had come to ebb more quickly than ever in the last few months; he felt, too, that she was overwrought and in need of humouring.

"We're not going to quarrel over a phrase, are we?" he asked gently.

"It depends on the phrase," she pouted. "You used to say you loved me, but when I offer myself to you——"

"It's a question of *time,*" he interrupted. "We should be mad to marry yet."

The luncheon was a mosaic of unhappy misunderstandings, and both were secretly relieved when it was over.

Deryk hurried back to work, promising to let her know when they could meet again; Idina walked about the Park and went home to her lodgings. In the morning she called again at the employment bureau and was asked to go at once into the manager's private office. Full of hope, she presented herself before an alert young man with a highly cultivated business manner.

"Miss Penrose?" he began. "Yes. P. PE. Here we are. Position as companion. What happened with your last employer, Miss Penrose? We had a lady in here two days ago; I thought you might suit, but, when she came to take up your reference, we didn't get much satisfaction. Let me see, who was your late employer?"

"Miss Dawson, The Grange, Aston Ripley," Idina answered; and then, rather defiantly, "What does she say about me?"

"Nothing. Declines—in terms—to say anything."

"But—she *must!*" Idina exclaimed.

"Purely optional," said the manager. "What was the trouble?"

Idina disposed of the question as quickly as possible.

"We didn't get on together," she said. "But—I shan't get a position anywhere, if I don't give a reference." The young manager was delicately silent. "Shall I?" she demanded.

"Our clients naturally expect one."

The truth sank slowly into Idina's brain.

"Do you mean to say that she can keep me out of work all my life by just refusing to say anything about me?"

"I wouldn't go as far as that. References aren't wanted everywhere." He looked with a practised eye at her fresh young face and delicately outlined figure. "The stage, for instance. Can you sing or dance?"

"I've never tried."

"H'm. Then in your own interests I wouldn't recommend it. I really asked you to come in, because, if Miss Dawson stands by what she says and if you can't give another reference, I don't think we can help you here."

He tidied away his papers with a brisk, business-like air of finality and looked up at her. Idina thanked him, bowed and went out into the street. She had fully expected to find Miss Dawson writing pages of suggestive innuendo; in her indignation she had half hoped to find the malicious pen running away and using language for which it could be held to account; never had she imagined that mere refusal to speak could inexorably bar every avenue of employment. Jumping on to an omnibus, she went home and wrote an urgent letter, begging Deryk to meet her at once. He was not in the County Club, when she left it there, but in the afternoon he telegraphed to say that he was engaged all day. In turn she telegraphed, "Implore you cancel engagement urgently necessary see you immediately."

The second message reached Deryk as he was dressing for dinner. In twenty minutes' time he was due to dine with Mrs. Welman at Claridge's and be introduced later in the evening to James Branksome, the theatrical producer and lessee of four of the principal London theatres devoted to musical comedy. Already their meeting had been three times postponed, twice by his own request and once at the instance of Mrs. Welman; at last all three were disengaged, and Deryk was more than ever reluctant to take risks with his luck. Branksome was to meet him that evening and hear his waltzes, when the party returned to supper in his rooms after the first night of an operetta at the Emperor's. Deryk balanced the long-standing pledge with Idina's telegram; her language was hysterical, but he knew her to be overwrought, and it would not do to say, as he was at first tempted to do, that she must pull herself together. Clearly he must go and steady her nerves. . . .

The only thing to do was to meet Branksome formally at the theatre, cut out the supper and let the waltzes take their chance at a later date. He would have cut out the theatre too, but a notice was expected of him for the "Critic."

The page boy was still waiting.

"Afraid cannot be with you till late," he wrote, "calling on chance otherwise will come to-morrow early."

Then he finished his dressing and hurried out to dinner.

Idina waited in her lodgings until half past seven and then went out. She started with an idea of getting dinner somewhere, but her appetite had left her, and she wandered about in the open because she could not bear to be alone any longer. As she turned into Edgware Road, her passage was barred, and she found Sidney Dawson standing bareheaded before her. There was nothing of the dandy about his tired face and dusty boots; the serio-comic wooer was sunk in purposeful energy and indignation.

"I've been looking for you all the afternoon, Miss Penrose," he began with a frown that terrified her while she felt that it was not intended for her. "We must get out of this crowd! Let's make for the Park, we can sit down there, I'm sure."

He gave her his arm and led the way with rapid strides towards the Marble Arch. As she hurried to keep pace with him, Idina could hardly believe that the stern-faced man who gnawed at his moustache in anger was the man who had mincingly insisted on using her Christian name.

"It was the merest chance I saw you at all," he explained volubly. "I might have spent the rest of my life looking for you, if I hadn't caught sight of you in St. James' Square this afternoon. I gave chase, of course, but you had the start and got a 'bus. I followed in a taxi, but I lost you just about here—one of these side streets, you know: I didn't see you again, though I prowled round for miles, till I spied you in the distance coming out of a telegraph office. Then I lost you again, I prowled round again; now I've found you, thank God! Let's get hold of two chairs; I want to talk to you."

Idina wondered, with a moment's dread, whether he was going to say that he was grown desperate and would commit suicide, unless she promised to marry him. Never before had she seen him so much stripped of his artificial elegance and gaiety.

"Sit down here," he commanded, pointing to two chairs.

"I'm not going to mince matters. What did my sister say to you the other day?"

The girl flushed and bit her lip.

"I can't discuss that," she said.

Sidney nodded grimly.

"Thank you. That's all I wanted to know. She said it to me, too—not that I mind; I can take care of myself; it's different with you. She threatened—but I didn't believe, I *knew* she couldn't . . . till I found she had. Frankly I don't know what's to be done. . . . If she were a man, I'd horsewhip her. . . . Apparently she's been talking to other people as well, I met Hatherly at the Club this morning. . . . That's how I heard about it." His explosive half-sentences ceased for a moment, and he turned appealingly to her. "What's to be done, Miss Penrose?"

Idina was long in answering.

"Nothing can be done," she said. "You can't overtake a story like that."

"But I'm not going to let you——"

"You can't help it," she answered in a dead voice. "It's awfully good of you to take so much trouble. . . . I—I've been expecting something of the kind. This morning——" She hesitated and then told him of the visit to the employment bureau.

Sidney snorted impatiently.

"That's a matter of pounds, shillings and pence," he said. "It's your reputation——" He paused and averted his face. "I've always felt that you needed protection, and that's one reason why I wanted you to marry me. I know I've not made much headway and, of course, I *am* several years older than you are; but, if you think that my name . . ." Idina shook her head. "I'm not asking you to be my wife, Miss Penrose; I'm asking you to accept anything that the position of a married woman gives you. Of course, my sister will make the obvious comment—she'll do that, whatever happens—but, if you want a home of your own, if you'll accept what I can give you—I won't even live in the same house——"

Idina laid her hand on his sleeve to stop him. The offer was bravely phrased, but he struggled in labour to bring out each word.

"It's much too good of you; I really can't. Probably the —the decent people know it's all a lie."

"But the people who don't know you? That story's probably running like wildfire through the length and breadth of Aston Ripley. I—I feel personally responsible."

Idina got up from her chair and held out her hand. She was too tired and dazed to think clearly. Deryk must do her thinking for her, and she must hurry on to the County Club to see whether her telegram had reached him. The effort of rising made her giddy, and she stood for a moment to steady herself. Sidney rose, too, with an expression of worry and bewilderment, as though he did not know what next to do.

"We can't leave things as they are, you know," he urged. "I want time to think it over— Have you had dinner?" Idina shook her head. "Well, will you give me the pleasure of your company at dinner somewhere—anywhere you like. You're not looking well, you know."

She declined the invitation and started in the direction of Park Lane, wondering how to get rid of her companion before reaching St. James' Square. Yet companionship was comforting even in a man who walked silently by her side, digging savagely at the gravel with his stick. They crossed Park Lane without speaking and turned into Brook Street. A knot of idlers was collected outside Claridge's, and they paused to let an immense green limousine turn out of the courtyard.

"Russian Ambassador," murmured Sidney, after a glance at the two men inside. "I used to know all these fellows in the old days, when I lived in London more. I expect the other's the Grand Duke Vladimir; I saw he'd arrived in London and I believe there's a gala night for him at Covent Garden."

They started forward again, but had to jump back quickly, as a second car came slowly out, bearing a woman and a man. Sidney raised his hat, muttering, "I wish that woman wouldn't bow to me."

"Who is she?" asked Idina, who had only caught sight of a small face with eager, dark eyes peeping out over an ermine collar.

"That's the famous Mrs. Welman," he answered a little contemptuously. "I can't make out what people see in her."

Idina leaned forward for a second look, wondering where she had heard the name. As she did so, the man inside perfunctorily acknowledged Sidney's salute and lolled back in his corner. In the failing light Idina could not be sure of his identity, but Sidney solved any doubts by remarking carelessly:

"Young Lancing with her again! He'll get into hot water, if he's not careful."

A third car turned into the street, and they were at liberty to walk on. As they entered Hanover Square, Sidney again suggested that they should have some dinner together.

"I think I will, if I may," Idina answered and was surprised to find that the words were in order and the sense coherent. And yet—she had only found out why Deryk would not come to see her! "Now that I come to think of it, I've had nothing since breakfast," she added with a laugh.

Sidney hailed a taxi and drove to the Alcazar, where he ordered a private room.

"You're looking terribly tired and white," he said, sitting timidly on the edge of the sofa where she was lying half-length with one hand over her eyes. "Dinner will do you all the good in the world; you're really not fit to look after yourself. I mustn't enlarge on that, however, but I want you always to remember that, however lonely and miserable you feel, there's always one man who's only waiting to be asked to help you. I—I—I want nothing in return."

Idina allowed him to take her hand and stroke it.

"You're much too kind to me," she said drowsily.

"I'd do anything in the world to make you happy," he answered simply. "But we won't discuss that any more. Would you like to wash your hands before dinner?"

Idina made no movement. Two months' conflicting emotions, the vague resentments, doubts and thoughts of the last few weeks became concentrated and intensified, like sun rays through a burning glass. Bitter disillusionment, loneliness, response to the least congenial kindness, terror of the future and vindictiveness towards the old woman who had contributed so much towards her misery, passed in hot successive waves through her mind.

"Why not discuss it?" she asked, hardly knowing whether she was speaking aloud.

Sidney leaned forward to take her in his arms. Then he drew back with an effort.

"I will devote all I have to your protection and happiness," he said stiffly. "And I will ask nothing in return."

Idina lay very still with her hand still pressed over her throbbing eyes.

"If you still want me to be your wife, I will marry you," she answered.

When dinner was over he drove her back to her lodgings. She was too tired to speak, and for once he had the intuitive wisdom to leave her to herself. During the meal they exchanged half a dozen sentences on the food and wine; at the door he promised to call for her next day. Idina walked upstairs in a condition of mental and bodily exhaustion that permitted of no thought. On her dressing-table lay a telegram—"Afraid cannot be with you till late calling on chance will come to-morrow early Deryk." She crumpled it up and threw it into the grate; then she told her landlady that she was going to bed and wanted to be called early the following day. The bedclothes were hardly pulled over her before she was asleep, and in the morning she awoke to find that the gas was still burning.

CHAPTER IV

RECOIL

> The end of life? Yes . . . I can tell you what that is. . . . Let me suffer always; not more than I am able to bear, for that makes a man mad, as hunger drives the wolf to sally from the forest; but still to suffer some, and never sink up to my eyes in comfort and grow dead in virtues and respectability.
>
> R. L. Stevenson: Letters.

I

Apart from the House of Commons, where he had sat for twelve years as a Cross Bench member, Raymond Stornaway's public life, as described by himself, consisted in compelling comparative strangers to give him money which they could ill spare and to lend their services to philanthropic undertakings in which, being opulent and healthy themselves, they could feel no shred of interest. His marauding charity was conducted in a genial, Robin Hood spirit, and the victims whom he casually plundered strayed thereafter with premeditation on to the road where they knew that he was lying in wait for them. In return there was no kind of burden which he would not shoulder for a friend or a friend's friend. Young men in search of preferment would state their case to Yolande, and, if they survived her shrewd and exhaustive screening, she would undertake to bind a spell on her uncle; thereupon Raymond, in the accepted phrase, was required to "make a magic"; and, before many days were passed, preferment, packed up and neatly tied, was waiting. Forty per centum of the candidates were unworthy of their positions, but, as Raymond insisted, a far higher proportion of failures would be secured by any competitive tests, and, as jobbery was inherent in the race, let it at least be conducted by people who knew something about it. If young married people were drifting apart, Raymond was required to give them commonsense and perspective; and, when boys were found spending too much money or contracting undesirable friendships, Raymond again was summoned to speak sternly. "I spend my life robbing people or telling them not to make fools of themselves," he complained, running his fingers distractedly through his hair. "I can't make out why there isn't a popular rising against me."

At the beginning of the 1913 season he found himself committed as usual, to the task of collecting young men and women from his numberless acquaintances, giving several large dinner parties and personally conducting twelve or fifteen couples to the dances of anxious hostesses. It was a reprisal, gladly endured, for his own offences in holding society to ransom, and, so long as Yolande made herself responsible for the arrangements, he could return to bed at what hour he pleased, leaving his entertainers to think that he had gone back to the House of Commons and the House of Commons that he was either sunk in dissipation or working late in his big office by the Vale of Health. "In this way everyone is pleased," he would remark contentedly.

For the first party of the season Deryk was invited, as Yolande was sure that he was overworking himself and stood in need of relaxation. Though he accepted the invitation, there was no sign of him by half-past eight nor any explanation of his absence until a belated note reached her from Hatherly, saying that Sir Aylmer was again seriously ill and begging her to communicate with Deryk, if she knew his whereabouts. Under stress of circumstances she revealed his Bloomsbury address, and the dinner proceeded without him. As they were starting for the Pebbleridges' ball at Bodmin Lodge, she was surprised to receive a telephone message, apologising for his absence and saying that he hoped to see her later in the evening.

"I didn't feel equal to dinner," he drawled nonchalantly, when they met after supper in the garden of the Lodge.

"I hope your uncle didn't think me rude. Not that I greatly care, if he did," he added unnecessarily.

"Whatever he thought, I know what *I* feel," Yolande answered with spirit.

"I suppose it would be really rude to say I didn't greatly care about that either."

The girl looked at him in astonishment. He was standing with eyes half-closed and an unnaturally white face, swaying slightly and sliding an unlit cigarette from one side of his mouth to the other. For a moment she thought that he had been drinking.

"What's the matter with you, Deryk?" she asked.

"Just bored with life," he answered. "I say, you don't feel equal to another supper, I suppose? I've had nothing but three glasses of water the last two days."

Anxiously she took his arm and led him back into the house.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "Is it your father again? Oh, I forgot to give you a message from Mr. Hatherly."

Deryk's face twisted itself into an unamiable smile.

"I suppose it might be called my father again. I got Hats' message, though. At least he ran me to earth in Great Ormonde Street; I suppose *you* gave me away. Yes, that's why I'm here."

"Is Sir Aylmer all right again?" she asked.

"Hats thinks he's dying," Deryk answered. "They wanted me at Ripley, so I dressed and came here. Hats always *does* think he's dying. What are you going to have to eat?"

Yolande sat for a moment without speaking, then pushed back her chair.

"I'm going upstairs," she said.

The supper room was emptying quickly, as couple after couple picked up gloves and lit cigarettes, and she made her way, with tightly shut lips and bright eyes, to the back of a little procession that was squeezing into the hall. Deryk did not follow, but, as she turned in the doorway, she saw him with his head buried in his hands, unconscious of the waiter's presence at his side. For a moment she hesitated in uncertainty; then hurried back to the table and made pretence of helping herself to food.

"*Do* tell me what the matter is!" she whispered, as the waiter withdrew. "Aren't you well? You look simply awful."

Deryk let fall his hands and revealed a haggard face with burning, restless eyes.

"I'm all right," he told her.

Yolande shook her head and touched his hand with her finger-tips.

"Don't talk till you've had something to eat," she ordered. "You've been overworking, Deryk, and now you're paying for it. What you've got to do is to have a complete rest—it's no use frowning, you'll simply smash up, if you don't—then, when you're all right again——"

He rose to his feet with a sudden movement and stood with twitching muscles, gripping his napkin in a hand that trembled.

"I—I can't stand this, Yolande," he exclaimed. "For pity's sake leave me out; talk about the Academy, any dam' thing—my father, if you like. Er, I'm sorry I was rude in the garden. I suppose I was trying to be funny."

With a sudden movement he collapsed on to his chair and searched clumsily for a fish knife and fork. For many moments Yolande was too much frightened to speak; but to sit silent under the sweep of his wild eyes lay beyond her powers, and she asked vaguely whether any later news of Sir Aylmer had been received. Deryk shook his head and went on eating. Only when he had finished his meal and drunk two glasses of champagne did he utter a word.

"If you're not booked up three-deep, can't we sit and talk somewhere? I've got some news for you."

They found two chairs in the empty smoking-room, and he pulled a crumpled letter from his pocket and tossed it unceremoniously into her lap. It was written in a hand unknown to her from a private hotel in South Kensington and bore a date of three days earlier, but no address.

"I feel," she read, "that you and I have got into a false position. Of course, as you said all along, there's been no engagement between us, and we were both free to do what we liked, but things weren't quite so easy as that. I believe you once loved me; and I would have done anything for you. Then you changed, and it would have been more honourable to tell me so. Perhaps you never did love me: perhaps you just thought you did. But I trusted you, even when you went away and refused to see me; I went on trusting you when you told me to my face that it wouldn't make any difference to you if I died or married someone else. I wonder what you thought of me! While I still believed that you wanted me, I offered to marry you, whatever the consequences; you may not know that, for a girl, that takes some doing. I'm afraid I wasn't clever enough to see that, while I was trying to force myself upon you, you were trying to get rid of me.

"But, Deryk, I'd sooner have been told by you than left to find it out. Why didn't you say frankly that you never meant anything, that I wasn't good enough, that you preferred someone else? I shouldn't have reproached you; how could I, when we were never engaged? But it would have been kinder than letting me think you still cared for me. Why did you go on pretending to care for me? I wasn't good enough for you, but no one else must speak to me. You wouldn't see me when I was in trouble, but you wouldn't let anyone else help me. I believed in you, Deryk, to the very end: it wasn't clever of me, but I'm not clever and, when you said that you loved me and me alone, I'm afraid I believed it. I was too fond of you before to reproach you now, and you were always free to do what you liked. Now that it is all over, I have only to say good-bye. By the time that you receive this, I shall have left England with my husband. We shall probably live abroad, but, whatever happens, you and I are not likely to meet. I wish you all happiness in your life.

"Idina Dawson."

Before Yolande had read three lines of the letter, one hand had stolen up to shield her face from Deryk's eyes; and, when she came to the end, she deliberately turned back to gain time. A third and a fourth reading brought her no nearer to understanding, and she finally folded up the letter and handed it back in silence.

"I—I—Oh, what had you been doing, Deryk?" she cried.

"I asked her to wait till I could afford to marry her," he answered in a toneless voice. Yolande stretched out her hand for the letter, but he shook his head. "You know all that's in it. She—I suppose she couldn't wait. I wired one evening to say I was coming next day, but she was out when I arrived. I went away and came back; I wired, I wrote. Then the landlady told me two days afterwards that a servant had called to take away her things. Then I got the letter." He paused, and the tip of his tongue came out to moisten his lips. "It—was the first I'd heard, the first I'd dreamed. . . . The way she selected to break it to me. Then I caught sight of *them* both coming out of a shop in Regent Street and getting into his car. That was two days ago. I—I—I've spent the rest of the time walking about the streets—thinking." He broke off and turned to Yolande in shrill excitement. "I'm mad! The whole world's mad! My God! Yolande, what am I going to do? What—what—what does it all mean?"

Down the stairs, as he paused, came the sound of a waltz, and in the hall Summertown's rather nasal voice squeaked, "I've got a goodish taxi here. Give you a lift home, Bettie, if you're a good girl." "I'm goin' on to the Fentons at the Hyde Park," answered a hard, unfeminine voice. "Casano's playing there."

Yolande rose from her chair and shut the door. Then she looked at the bowed head and twitching hands and caught him gently by the shoulders.

"You must pull yourself together," she said. "I don't understand, I can't say the ordinary things; it's too bad for that. You must face what's happened——"

"What else d'you think I've been doing?"

"You've got to go on in spite of it," she continued excitedly. "She's gone, and you've got your whole life to make, you've got to see that you don't let it be spoiled. You've got——"

"For God's sake, *stop!* Yolande," he cried.

She bit her lip at the rebuke.

"I'm sorry, Deryk." There was a moment's silence; then she caught his hand in hers, "Oh, my poor boy, if I knew what to say, if only I could make it not hurt so much!"

At the sudden softening of her voice after its moment of asperity, he flung away and stood at the fireplace with his back to her, hiding his eyes with one hand. When he turned, his cheeks were wet, and he looked pointedly away from her.

"You'll break me up, if you talk like that," he muttered huskily. "Tell me I'm a fool, say it was all my fault—I can stand that; but—I came here for sympathy and I can't stand it when you offer it me."

He began walking round the room, examining the pictures, while Yolande watched him in silent fascination. As though dreaming, she heard him asking when Lord Pebbleridge had been in India and herself answering that she believed he had once been A. D. C. to the Governor of Bombay; then they stood side by side looking at a faded group in front of Government House. He moved on to the next picture, like a man making his way perfunctorily through a gallery; again they discussed it with lack-lustre pretence of interest.

"She couldn't wait—six months," he cried suddenly.

"There's more in it than that, Deryk."

"Oh, a bird in the hand!"

"If you really think that, you're well out of it. She's had some big shock, some awful disappointment. . . . I *know;* I'm a woman."

She slipped her arm through his, but he disengaged himself and sprawled heavily on a couch in front of the fireplace.

"Well, at least I can take a holiday now," he sighed heavily.

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I've made quite a lot of money the last month or two and, until that's gone, I needn't do any work; there'll be more coming, if I ever bother to finish the Ilkley Papers. And then——"

"Well?"

"I can get what I like out of my father. Hats told me so to-night. He'll climb down, he'll settle anything I like on me, tear up the trust business—anything, if I'll only go down to Ripley. Hats swears he will! If she'd waited another *week*. . . ."

Yolande looked at her watch and picked up her gloves.

"I *must* be getting home to bed, Deryk," she said. "*Are* you going down? You ought to, you know."

His underlip shot out, and he shook his head sombrely.

"He can't make the best of both worlds. He's won over Dina, and I wish him joy of it. As for his money, he can do what he likes with it. I can always make enough to live, and he can give it to a Home for Incurables or leave it to me as he pleases; only I won't have it, if he attaches any conditions. He can have the fun of seeing everything he's piled up so industriously simply going begging, and he won't like that. He can see me going to the devil how I please, without being able to raise a finger to stop me; and he won't like that either. And I—I shall take a holiday and forget."

It was three o'clock when they parted, and Deryk walked home along Knightsbridge in the grey-blue light of dawn. A note in Hatherly's writing lay on his table, and he tore it unread into four pieces, resolving to change his rooms as soon as possible, since Yolande had revealed their whereabouts. Then, without undressing, he threw himself upon his bed and switched off the light.

Hatherly at the same time was drawing near to Aston Ripley by the last train. He walked from the station to Ripley Court, let himself in by the side door and went to

Sir Aylmer's bedroom. Phillimore was dozing in a chair outside, Benson and the doctor were within. Sir Aylmer raised heavy eyes, as the door opened, and asked whether Deryk had been found.

"And he refused to come?" he went on, as Hatherly bent over the bed. "You told him what I—said I might do about the money?"

"It came too late. He'd heard about Dawson, of course, and he was very savage. How are you, Aylmer?"

Sir Aylmer was silent for many minutes; his eyes had narrowed and his lips closed tightly, when he heard that Deryk was obdurate.

"Forsyte says I've turned the corner," was the reply at last. "Who was right about that girl now, Ted?"

"Don't let's discuss that now. You ought to be asleep, and I shan't be sorry to be in bed."

Hatherly nodded good-night to the three men and tiptoed to the door. Had he been in the mood to justify himself, he could have asked who was right now about Deryk. In his own mind he was satisfied that, whatever else Deryk might do, he would never set foot in Ripley Court while his father was alive.

"The world's a big place," he said to himself, as he walked to his room. "But, with all their money, it's not big enough for those two."

2

On the day following her tragic conversation with Deryk at Bodmin Lodge, Yolande invited herself to dine alone with her uncle. She was so sore and angry on Deryk's account that she could only talk half-heartedly of measures for restoring peace at Ripley Court, but she had a real hunger to find some balm for the boy's wounded spirit. Always honest with herself, however, she did not pretend to know male youth in its tragic moments nor what could be expected to alleviate its suffering.

"Time's the only cure, chick," Raymond told her, when she had described their meeting overnight. "You saw him raw, of course, and these things hurt like sin, but he'll get over it in time. Aylmer behaved like a fool, but masterful old men always do, and now he's paying the price. You mustn't force the pace. The only thing now is to keep Deryk occupied. I wish for his sake that you'd marry him."

"But I'm not going to marry anyone," she objected. "Besides, it wouldn't be quite the moment to suggest it."

Raymond shook his head with wistful sagacity.

"There you're wrong, my dear. Half the unhappy marriages of this world are made by men and women who miss their aim and hit something that they don't want in recoil. But you and he would suit each other very well; however, I'm not suggesting it seriously; I'm only warning you that, if he's not kept busy, he'll get up to mischief. He was lunching with Mrs. Welman to-day. Surely I told him not to make a fool of himself with her? Yes, I know I did."

"I don't think *that* means anything," Yolande answered. "Deryk's too fastidious; he prides himself on it."

"We all start by doing that." Raymond looked pensively at the ash on his cigar. "It would be a good thing to get Deryk packed off to Hellenopolis, where Felix could keep an eye on him. If we're making a magic, that's the thing to go for."

Yolande thought over the advice and spent several days trying to get hold of Deryk, but his attendance at "Peace" office was irregular and no one knew where he had gone from his old address in Great Ormonde Street. George Oakleigh promised to bring them together as soon as possible, but a week had gone by before they met at dinner in Prince's Gardens. Pressed to explain his movements, Deryk said that he had been taking the promised holiday; pressed to describe the holiday, he reeled off a list of dinners and dances, ending with a week-end on Sir Adolf Erckmann's house-boat at Wargrave. He was looking more tired and ill than ever before, with nervously bright eyes and an aggressive, rather reckless manner.

"Do people of that kind amuse you?" Yolande asked a little disdainfully. "They used not to."

"The Erckmann crowd? No. They keep me from thinking, though, and I suppose I really belong to them, being cross-bred. Why don't you come and meet them? Summertown and Mrs. Welman are dining with me to-morrow at Ranelagh; come and make a fourth."

"I have no wish to meet Mrs. Welman, thank you, and, if we're going on being friends, you'd better not ask me again. I don't regard it as a compliment."

"If *I* know her, there's no reason why you shouldn't."

"Ah, Deryk! in the old days, when I really liked you, you wouldn't have known her." He made no attempt at defence, and Yolande laid her hand on his. "Don't let's quarrel, when I want to help you. I know you're all right, but that set has got an awfully bad name. Lord Summertown's simply being dropped by people since he took up with them. Not that he matters, but you *do*. You've got a wonderful brain, Deryk; you've got talent, accomplishments, health, friends—everything that will take you anywhere—I do want to see you do something with it all. Why don't you?"

Deryk was listening unsympathetically and with an air of polite boredom, as though she were investing his life with a seriousness which he had ceased to attach to it. The clear grey eyes and auburn hair suggested a chastity of life and spirit to which he had grown unaccustomed in the "Say-all, do-all, enjoy-yourself-and-damn-the-consequences" company of the last week.

"What can I do?" he asked at length.

"What *can't* you do? There's nothing. Will you join Dr. Manisty in Asia Minor? He's coming home soon for the malaria season, but he'll be going out again in the autumn. Will you go into public life? Uncle Raymond could push you almost anywhere. You see, Deryk, you've had a big thing knocked out of your life and you've got to put something in its place. It isn't an end in itself to write just enough articles for the papers—they're not even very good articles—to keep a roof over your head and spend the rest of your time racketing about with people who've got nothing else in life to do. Apart from everything else, it doesn't satisfy you and it's demoralising. Now I won't preach any more, but, unless you take yourself at your proper value, I've got no use for you."

She smiled and turned to old Bertrand Oakleigh, who was on her other side. Deryk sat lost in reflection for some time. During the early months of the year he had worked so hard that he had lost the habit of regular sleep; pursuing a vicious circle, he had sat writing half-way through the night because he knew that he could not sleep. Next day he rose jaded and without appetite and was unequal to work until he had counteracted the effect of the broken night. . . . He shamefacedly shirked recalling how often he had drunk a brandy and soda before going to his office. (He could not remember quite when it had started.) It was so quick and convenient, and afterwards he did not mind, if he missed luncheon. By the evening he had gone flat again, but a cocktail put him right for dinner, and dinner itself, with some champagne, kept him vivacious throughout the evening—too vivacious, perhaps, for he was always too wide-awake to sleep when he returned home. And from that it became a bore to go home, when he knew that he could not sleep; and there were always at least three houses a night where he could amuse himself for an hour or two. When at last he reached home between five and six in the morning, sometimes he slept and sometimes he lay awake with a waltz running unforgetably in his head. Of course, it would have been absurd to slack off next day just because he had stayed up late overnight; that would have been to confess weak will and a dominating taste for dissipation. Every morning he was called at the same time; every day he worked the same number of hours. There were moments when his eyes smarted and ached for want of sleep, moments, too, when he felt listless and unappetised, but a brandy and soda in the morning pulled him round wonderfully. . . .

At another time he would have despised himself, but he now felt that there was nothing to contemn. Was he ever drunk? Did he ever fail to deliver his copy up to time? For all Yolande's disdain, his intimacy with Mrs. Welman had never taken an irrevocable step. Indeed, there was something idyllic in their friendship which prevented it; they brought out the good in each other; if she had ever lived or spoken loosely, his presence seemed to restrain her, and in her turn she gave him an understanding sympathy which he had never found in any of the women whom he had known intimately. . . . There was nothing much to shew the world in all that he was doing, but, when he did get to bed nowadays, he was at least too tired to picture Sidney Dawson and his wife traversing Europe on their honeymoon or to wonder what was happening at Aston Ripley. An end must come at some time, but he could not trouble himself to think what form it would take, and, if Yolande pouted and looked at him with reproachful eyes, he would simply avoid her until she had changed her tune. He was certainly not to be hunted out to Asia Minor to please her; for one thing, there was too much unreality in digging for the defaced capital of a pillar, and, for another, he was not equal to the solitude of life with a man whom he hardly knew and the thoughts that would come to break his solitude.

It was a silent dinner, as far as Deryk was concerned, and he had justified himself into a fine indignation by the time that he went upstairs. Yolande just lacked the experience and perception to leave him alone, and his indignation increased with every mark of affection that she shewed him.

"He'll be home in quite a few months now," she said, returning to her Manisty theme. "I shall depend on you to come and meet him."

"Oh, I don't suppose there'll be any difficulty about that," he answered without interest. "Well, Yolande, I must be off. I promised to be in Charles Street by eleven."

"But why don't you go to bed? It would be so much better for you. You're simply wearing out your nerves.

Or, if you don't want to go home yet, come to my flat and play to me."

Deryk laughed and shook his head.

"I should compromise you with the whole of Stafford's Inn," he said.

"My housekeeper's there, stupid."

He shook his head again.

"It's no go, I'm afraid. I promised to go and play to Mrs. Welman."

"I didn't ask *where* you were going."

"But *I* thought there was no reason for not telling you," he answered tartly, a thirst for grievance. "I don't know what you've heard about her, but I'll bet it's not true, and, if it were, I can really take care of myself. Good-night."

Yolande retained his proffered hand in her own for a moment, looking him steadily in the eyes and speaking with slow gravity.

"I don't feel I know you nowadays, Deryk," she said. "I used to be very fond of you, but I don't think I am now. I—think you're deteriorating."

He laughed with mirthless hilarity.

"I'm sure of it. You see, when you've nothing in the world to live for——"

"You poor boy! When I talk to you, I always feel as if I were your mother, Deryk. Why don't you let me help you a bit? If you'd only listen to me a little bit, instead of being so wilful!" She hesitated before taking what she knew would be the gravest decision of her life. Deryk did not love her, and she would have to work hard to make him love her, though ultimately she would succeed. And she did not love him at all, she did not love anyone; Felix Manisty through sheer helplessness and childish charm came nearest to her heart. But she could spend herself to make something of Deryk, something great. No one else would, no one else could. She would not be happy, perhaps she would be something more. . . . She *could* not stand by and see him wasting himself! "Don't go to Charles Street to-night!" she whispered, retaining his hand

and looking into his hot, restless eyes. "I'll do anything in the world you ask me, if you'll stay here."

Deryk laughed and withdrew his hand.

"Good-night, Yolande; I'm late already. See you again soon."

Yolande sighed and crossed the room to the sofa where Raymond was seated.

"Another of my failures, uncle dear," she began with an assumption of light-hearted ruefulness. "I as good as told him I'd marry him—it was what you wanted me to do, remember—and all he would say was that he was going to play the piano to Mrs. Welman. If I hadn't the sweetest disposition on earth, I should drop him abruptly. I can't do that, though, while he looks so rotten. If you were a really helpful uncle——"

Raymond caught her hand and patted it reflectively.

"This is the end of June," he calculated. "In a month's time I go to Vienna to buy some doctors for one of my hospitals, and I see no reason why he shouldn't come with me. He can come as my secretary, and you as his companion; and between us we'll tell him not to make a fool of himself. When we get back, Felix will be getting ready for Asia Minor again, and we shall have several strings to our bow. We can send Deryk out with him, or perhaps we shall have made peace with Ripley Court by then—there'll be a hundred and one possibilities when I've given him a talking-to. If I write to him to-night, will you promise to come? I decline to regenerate him single-handed."

Yolande nodded.

"When is Dr. Manisty due back?" she asked. "Don't look like that, dear; he never writes to me."

"Just about the time we start," Raymond answered. "I shall be sorry to miss him."

"But we shall see him before he goes out again."

"*He* will take good care of that," said Raymond with a smile.

Yolande found herself blushing in spite of herself.

"Of course we shall. We're the only friends he's got.

But that's all, uncle dear. I know you think he's in love with me, you think everyone's in love with me, which is quite the proper frame of mind for you, but they're not. When Dr. Manisty gets out to Hellenopolis, he forgets my very existence. It's rather humiliating, when you remember that I *made* him, but I told you I'd got a very sweet disposition. As long as people are happy, I don't care, bless them!"

On leaving the Oakleighs' house, Deryk hailed a taxi and drove to Charles Street. The drawing-room was in half darkness, when he entered, and he found Mrs. Welman curled up on a sofa and reading a book by the light of a single lamp. She threw the book on to the floor and made way for him at her side, giving him her hand to kiss, as she listened to his apologies for being late.

"It doesn't matter. I've only just got rid of Adolf Erckmann," she explained. "By the way, you'll only have me to play to; I was too tired to get anyone else to come."

"Well, I'm sure I'm too tired to play," Deryk answered. "My scheme is to sit here, while you talk to me. How are you and what have you been doing, since last I saw you?"

A moment passed before she answered him. Then, with affected carelessness, she said:

"Oh, nothing. The usual, usual round. Rather lonely and miserable, but that's nothing new. Tell me why you're tired, Deryk. Can't you sleep?"

He shook his head, and she laid one hand on his shoulder, drawing him to her until his cheek lay against hers and he could feel her long eyelashes flickering.

"We should look rather funny, if your husband came in," Deryk suggested with an embarrassed laugh.

She released him suddenly.

"I'm sorry, if you think I'm not behaving properly," she said loftily. "I was trying to be kind, because you weren't looking well. . . . Are you too tired to play?"

Deryk rose and fetched himself a cigarette from the mantelpiece.

"Now, don't put on that air, Lucile," he said with a laugh.

"It would sound rather funny, if he heard you calling me 'Lucile'."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Welman. What would you like me to play?"

She smiled and held out her hands to him.

"Don't be dignified, Deryk," she begged. "My husband is in Wiesbaden, and you said you wanted me to talk to you. Sit down as you were before, and let's console each other. We're both tired and both lonely and both rather, rather miserable, so let's kiss and be friends."

He went back to his old place and raised her fingers to his lips in sign of amity.

"That's not what I call *consoling,"* she pouted.

"It was respectful."

Again her arm stole out and drew him to her.

"I don't want respect, Deryk," she whispered. "I want to be made a fuss of. Won't you kiss me properly?" He made no sign. "Don't you want to? I've never asked anyone before."

Deryk tried to disengage himself, but her other arm was linked round his neck.

"I've never kissed anyone before—except once," he said; and then combatively, "I suppose you don't believe that."

"Yes, I do. That's why I always feel so safe with you. You're so young and chivalrous. Oh! if you knew how I hated the set I live in! They're bloated with money and too much to eat and drink: Lord Pennington's hardly ever sober, and Erckmann comes here, reeking of cigars and talking broken English, and there's always a crowd of silly little boys, half of them making love to me and the other half trying to shock me. . . . Then I met you, and you were so fresh and clean—you know you're very good-looking, Deryk; you've got beautiful eyes, much deeper and softer than mine, and your head looks as if it had been cut out of marble—and you always treated me as though you'd never heard a word spoken against me. But you must have. . . . I'm not quite as bad as I'm painted, but I'm nothing like as good as you think me; and I'm really, really grateful for the way you always behave to me. My life's not particularly happy, but you've been a great help to me."

She unclasped her hands and lay back in her corner, shading her face from the reading lamp. Deryk's eyes were moist and soft, as he leant towards her and raised her lips to his.

"Poor little Lucile!" he whispered.

"No, don't kiss me, Deryk!" she said. "I know you think it's wrong. And it *is,* if you think it is."

"Not with you."

"Yes, you do. You said you'd only kissed one woman in your life—you'll be doing her a wrong."

His answer was to bend forward until their lips met. Her faint resistance died away, and she allowed herself to be drawn into his arms and held there, still and unyielding. Gradually the pressure of his hands on her bare shoulders relaxed, but, as his quickened breathing abated its pace, she twined her arms round his neck, stroking his lean cheeks and running her fingers through his hair. The hunger of many months' loneliness clamoured to be satisfied, and for the first time after the agony of the past weeks he felt at peace.

The clock, striking midnight, roused them from their trance, and Deryk jumped up, protesting that he must go. As he took out his case and lit another cigarette, he kept his eyes averted, but, when he turned again to the sofa, Mrs. Welman was watching him with a smile.

"I must go," he repeated.

"Already?"

"I'm afraid so."

"You'll have a drink before you go?" She made a movement towards the bell and then stopped. "My maids will all be asleep by now, and they're at the very top of the house. I'll go and fetch it myself. Deryk, you *have* made my hair untidy. If you were really polite, you'd offer to do it for me."

"I've got to go home," he answered, looking again at the clock. "When shall I see you again, Lucile?"

She hurried out of the room without answering and returned a moment later with glasses and a decanter.

"I don't suppose you want to see me again, do you?" she asked with a provocative humility that stirred him, while he felt it to be unreal. "I've forfeited your good opinion—Deryk, it isn't fair to try and kiss me when my hands are full and I can't protect myself!"

He laughed in disregard of the protest and repeated his question.

"If you really, really cared about seeing me, you wouldn't be in such a hurry to go," she complained.

"My dear, look at the time!"

"But no one knows you're here."

He stood irresolute, gazing at the soft brown eyes and pouting lips; thinking, too, of the assurance with which he had defended their relationship to Yolande Stornaway. In fleeting reaction he felt that his spirit had lost some of its bloom since he had breathed the scent of Lucile's hair and rained kisses down on her upturned face; so it would seem to Yolande's austere chastity of spirit. Then with quick defiance he told himself that he had done nothing that mattered and that he did not care what Yolande thought.

"You needn't go *just* yet," Lucile pleaded.

"I thought you had to be so jolly circumspect on account of your husband," he said with an uneasy laugh.

She pressed him back on to the sofa and handed him a tumbler.

"Let's forget him for—five minutes," she suggested.

"We've forgotten him most of the evening. I've never had the honour of meeting him, Lucile, but I think I should feel rather a fool, if I ever did. It doesn't seem quite playing the game."

She turned from him abruptly and stood resting her arm on the mantelpiece and staring down into the grate.

"Don't let me keep you," she said in a low voice; and then with a sudden cry, "Oh, why didn't I let you go when you wanted to? Why must you hurt me, Deryk?"

He jumped up uncomprehendingly and threw his arms round her shoulders.

"Darling, what have I done?"

"What made you say that? We haven't done him any harm." Deryk was silent. "You'd better go, if you think we have."

"Lucile——"

She shook his arm from her shoulders and threw herself on to the sofa, covering her face with her hands. Deryk faced her with bemusement in his eyes and then dropped on to his knees and caught her gently by the wrists.

"I don't understand what it's all about," he said in perplexity. "Lucile, tell me what I've done."

Her face, as he pulled away her hands, was expressionless, with lack-lustre eyes. For a moment she looked at him; then disengaged one hand and began arranging her hair where it had broken loose.

"I suppose you were right," she murmured after a long silence. "It was my fault, I led you on—oh, yes, I did—, but I forgot everything, everything for a moment. I was quite, quite happy." She drew one hand wearily across her eyes, as though she had been wakened from sleep. "I'm all right now, Deryk. Good-bye."

She half rose, but he checked the movement and sat beside her again.

"You're in a great hurry to get rid of me, Lucile."

"You said you had to get home."

"I much prefer being here."

"It wouldn't be 'playing the game'," she answered with a suggestion of taunt in her voice.

Deryk walked half-way to the door, conscious that his next words would be big with fate. He could throw a "good-night" over his shoulder and walk home, knowing that in the morning he would be glad and secure in his own self-respect. Or he could consent to stay—like any other man. Yolande would never know; it was not a question of stealing Lucile from her husband, she had never belonged to him; only his own standards were involved, and he had abandoned many of them already without greatly noticing their subsequent loss. His brain worked quickly during his leisurely progress half-way across the room. He recognised that he was not in love with Lucile, that she was but an incident, that there would be an end—probably a troublesome and recriminatory end—to their intimacy; there might also be discovery later on and a public scandal, after which he would be expected to marry her. (He wondered if she knew that he had the money that he made—and no more.) It was going to be a furtive, perhaps a disastrous, relationship, and he felt no overpowering desire to begin it; his sense of self-control was never stronger; he could walk home as easily as he had come. . . .

A slight sound behind him made him turn round, and he saw Lucile with her head buried in her arms and her shoulders heaving. Still conscious of his detachment, he came back and seated himself on the edge of the sofa by her side.

"Lucile!" he whispered, bending down until his lips touched her ear.

"Deryk, I didn't mean to make you angry!" she cried.

"I'm *not* angry, darling."

"Yes, you are, or you wouldn't have gone away like that. Oh, Deryk, don't go away yet! I'm so miserable, *miserable!*"

For all his detachment, he could feel his heart beating quicker, as he lifted her on to his knees and kissed her. There was a last moment of struggle and hesitation before he waved jaunty and contemptuous farewell to his old idols. It was absurd to try to be different from other men. He kissed her again and tried to pull her hand from her eyes, but she protested in a whisper that they were red and that she was not fit to be seen. When at length she looked at him, there was no trace of tears, but he felt that it was a transparent comedy and that he had duly played the part allotted him

Next morning Deryk found an invitation from Raymond to lunch with Yolande and himself and discuss a scheme for some new work.

He telephoned in good humour and great self-confidence that he would be delighted to come; and after luncheon Raymond explained his proposal for a business visit to Vienna.

"It's awfully good of you, Mr. Stornaway," said Deryk during a pause in the conversation, "but I'm afraid I shan't have time."

"It will be three weeks or a month at the outside," Raymond answered. "Count it as a holiday, if you like. It will do you all the good in the world to get away from London; you're looking stale, you want a change of air."

Deryk nodded gravely.

"I know I do," he agreed. "As a matter of fact I'm going out of town immediately. Young Fatty Webster has made over to me his bungalow at Bray for the summer, and I was thinking of living there and coming up to town each day."

There was a pause; then Yolande said,

"Can't you take a few weeks' real holiday, Deryk? It would do you much more good to knock off all work and come with us. I'll promise not to preach to you, and you would enjoy it."

"It's impossible, Yolande. The 'Ilkley Papers' are coming out in the autumn, and I can't get away till I've corrected the proofs."

"Can't you bring them with you?"

"I haven't had them from the publishers yet. I'm most awfully sorry; it sounds a delightful trip."

Raymond saw that there was nothing to be won by pressing the point and closed the discussion with a word of conventional regret; Yolande's mind was already busily at work to find some means of regaining control before Deryk finally passed beyond her influence. Deryk himself ate an excellent meal and talked with the greatest good-humour and animation. The more he saw of life, the easier it became; he felt that he was playing the comedy with a fine, careless grace, accepting and mastering each situation as he met it. The double life was far simpler than when he first came to live in London; he was far more skilled to throw his friends off the scent. Thus, the story of Fatty Webster's bungalow at Bray rang true from the start: he was in fact going down there at the end of the week: but it was not necessary to tell the Stornaways that Mrs. Welman had a house at Maidenhead within agreeably short punting distance. She was going there that day and proposed to stay there until her husband's return from Wiesbaden. They had made all arrangements that morning, and, as soon as Deryk had returned home and changed his clothes, he set out in search of Webster and secured the loan of the bungalow, its servants and cellar from the good-natured owner, who was flattered to be of service to a man who had only noticed him at Eton in order to maltreat him.

At the end of luncheon Raymond tried to compress into three minutes the subject matter of many sermons contemplated for delivery on the journey to Vienna. Prefacing the attack with the statement that it was no business of his, he said that he had spent a recent week-end at Aston Ripley and heard with some surprise that Deryk had not been there since the winter.

"Didn't Yolande tell you that I'd had a disagreement with my father?" Deryk answered with a show of ingenuous wonder. "He declined to meet me on a question of money, and of course I couldn't submit to that, so I came away."

Raymond stirred his coffee reflectively.

"I didn't know any details," he said. "We're rather specialists in family quarrels, we Stornaways; I had a row with my father, and Yolande's had one with hers. I think it's necessary, if we aren't going to sink down under a paralysing load of ancestor-worship. Either that, or you must pop everyone over forty into the lethal chamber. According to my view, though, the thing should be carried through without animosity. It's always supposed to be bad form in England to shew your feelings, so, the moment I'd carried my point with the old man, I went and shook hands. Yolande did the same with my brother."

Deryk smiled a little bitterly.

"But then you'd won, and I haven't," he objected.

"You've got the money," Raymond pointed out. "Don't think I'm unsympathetic, I cordially approve your running away and making yourself independent, I wish more young people would do it. But I repeat, you've got the money, so why not go and shake hands?"

"Because that's the one pull I've got over him," Deryk answered between his teeth. "Don't pretend Yolande's not told you the whole story," he went on roughly. "You wouldn't have gone back if *your* father had behaved like that."

Raymond sucked at his cigar and assumed his most judicial manner.

"It's so hard to say," he confessed. "I'm not vindictive. I'd have taken devilish good care to see that the old man didn't play the same trick twice, but, once I was up against the accomplished fact, I should have said 'Kismet.' Or so I think *now;* I honestly don't know what I should have done at your age."

"Well, I know what I'm going to do," said Deryk.

Raymond nodded.

"It's a matter in which you're the only possible judge," he said. "The one thing that you've got to keep in mind is, of course, how you'll feel when it's too late. Your father's a very sick man—I don't advance that as any excuse, I'm for popping sick men in the lethal chamber—and it's just a question whether it won't pay you to make his last days as comfortable as you can, consistently with your own independence. Pay you in moral satisfaction, I mean; inward glow, all that sort of thing. You see, when a man dies and you appreciate for the first time that it's too late to pay him back that fiver or apologise for upsetting him, you feel so helpless; naturally, too,—we've all been brought up on that *de mortuis* nonsense—you only remember the best about them, what a capital fellow he was when he took you out to dinner that time before going back to school. And then you'll feel very sick to think that you weren't friends when he died— At least that's been my experience; you may be different, but I feel I've let a number of fellows go before I realised that it was too late. But these are gloomy thoughts for a luncheon party, and by the same token I must be getting back to work. I'm sorry you can't come to Vienna with us, Deryk, but very glad to get this glimpse of you to-day."

Deryk stood without answering for several minutes. Raymond put on his hat and buttoned his gloves.

"I think my father ought to apologise to *me,*" Deryk said at length.

"Fathers never do, my boy. It's part of the general make-up."

"He's never personally asked me to come back, he's never alluded to—you know, the other thing."

"That's part of his particular make-up," said Raymond easily. "But, look here, I really don't know what right I've got to interfere; I might be a father myself. Good-bye, Deryk."

He hurried away with his arm through Yolande's, leaving Deryk to fumble uncertainly with his gloves.

"Might as well have been talking to the nearest pillar-box, I suppose, chick?" he asked of his niece with a rueful smile.

"Oh, I don't think so, uncle darling. It's good seed."

"These boys think I'm so frightfully wise," murmured Raymond wonderingly. "Can't make out why. I merely tell 'em not to make fools of themselves. But it doesn't matter anyway."

3

Raymond Stornaway and his niece went alone to Vienna towards the end of July. As ever with Raymond, it was a marauding enterprise, undertaken this time to rob the Viennese of some of their best physicians and surgeons.

Adopting his favourite old attitude of the bland, sane man surrounded by imbeciles, he had demonstrated that the world was sick and that no one would cure it, no one wanted to cure it, no one knew how to cure it, no one would pay to cure it. Yet all admitted that sick, unhappy men were bad workers. He must cure it himself, starting with England, and it must pay its way, like everything else. A city of rivers and woods was to be built on the crest of a mountain-chain and given over to healing these troublesome sick. Such skill and attention as money could buy were to be provided, and in return each patient on admission was to surrender one tenth of his annual income. ("These damned ruffians won't support my hospitals voluntarily, so I shall have to make them.") The counting-house clerk, who received four pounds a week, would present himself for examination and, after diagnosis, pay his twenty pounds. Sir Aylmer Lancing, if the examining physician decided to accept him, would pay a trifle over one hundred thousand pounds; thereafter both would be treated equally with equal right to the services of the most expensive specialists in any part of the world, who were to be chosen by an administrative board and paid a fixed salary. Raymond aimed at paying them exactly double what they had received in their most properous year, but in the incubation of his scheme there was difficulty in arriving at accurate figures. When the establishment charges had been met, the balance of the year's takings was to be handed by the trustees to the administrative board to apply to the erection of new buildings and the development of research. On paper the scheme had been worked out in detail, but Raymond had yet to surround himself with a sufficient number of the most skilled practitioners in medicine and surgery and to wean them from private practice, often, moreover, to exile them from their own country. And he had to find the initial funds to build his city and guarantee the salaries of the staff for a period of years. However small his beginnings, the original outlay would be gigantic.

"But I've come to the conclusion that mine's the only way," he told Yolande, with his customary assurance of manner and vigour of speech, as they settled into the Orient Express at Ostend. "We've spoilt these scoundrels of doctors by erecting them into a priesthood, so that they never dare say they don't know anything; they'd never accept the logical position of being paid an annual retaining fee to keep people in health, the fee to be *pro rata* re-paid for every day that the patient was ill; what are you to do? All reforms come from the laity, of course; sanitation, ventilation, manipulative surgery—and the doctors oppose them at every step, like the infernal, fraudulent Trade Union that they are. But in other respects the laity's only fit for the lethal chamber; you pay some charlatan two guineas to tell you you're over-smoking and then light a cigar from the match-box on his confounded consulting-room table. The only way is to pay the institute such a fee —*ten per cent of your income,* my dear—that it can't afford not to cure you and to bleed the fool of a patient till he feels that he must get something for his money. My City of Health's going to be the beginning of a new world. My dear, you don't know what you can do with healthy people; you can make 'em happy; you may even be able to make 'em good. I'm a fat old man and I can remember Lesseps' trying to build the Canal at Panama. There was an amount of corruption to make your hair stand on end, and he tried to cut through at ocean level and a number of things of that kind, but what killed the canal was fever. I've had it, and it dam' nearly killed me. And I saw the fever being cleaned away afterwards. And lately I've seen the new canal beginning to build. There's a parable for you, chick."

On arriving at Vienna, Raymond called at the Embassy and put Yolande in charge of the wife of one of the Secretaries; for a fortnight she wandered in the morning round Europe's most beautiful city and drove in the afternoon to the deep-wooded suburbs of Schönbrunn, returning at night to dine and listen to music. He saw her only at occasional meals, and the rest of his day was devoted to expounding the scheme of his institution. At the fortnight's end he announced his intention of taking a week's holiday before returning and of starting it that night with dinner anywhere that Yolande chose. They dined, accordingly, at Sacher's and looked in for an hour at the Apollo; but the house was stifling, and she had to beg to be taken into fresh air.

"Personally I can sit for hours just watching people," he said, as they threaded their way through the crowds on the pavements of the Ring-Strasse. "And for sentimental reasons I should like to sit in the Opern-Café just once again before I die; it was a favourite haunt of mine when I was at the Embassy, but you have to be very careful what you say, because everything's overheard. I can tell you a story about that."

He led the way across the street to the gaily lighted front of a café with three open bays divided by trellis-work partitions. A waiter served them with coffee and the invariable squat tumblers of cold water, and Raymond leaned back with a cigar in his mouth, watching the idle stream that flowed and eddied on the broad pavement before them. The babel of tongues sounded like the drone of a half-heard mass, German predominating with occasional interruptions in low musical Magyar, abrupt Italian cadences or staccato outbursts of Czech.

"What was the story, uncle dear?" Yolande asked between sips of her coffee.

Raymond's chubby face broke into smiles, and his eyes twinkled.

"Oh, it was my first and last public riot," he began. "I was sitting here one night a year or two ago, when two boys came in and ordered supper. One, I may tell you, was our young friend Summertown, the other was a wild Irishman named O'Rane, who was supposed to be in charge of him; I found afterwards that he was a friend of George Oakleigh's. They fell into conversation with an Hungarian and became rather animated. Not knowing the language, I can't tell you what they said, but it was sufficiently treasonable or offensive or something to bring an Austrian officer from the far side of the partition, and after that it was a matter of moments before they came to blows. Well, outwardly, at least, I'm a respectable, middle-aged man, so I cleared out quicker than I've ever moved before, but in thirty seconds every man's teeth were meeting in his neighbour's throat. They brought in the police, there were drawn swords whirling, and in the thick of it I could see young O'Rane fighting like a she-devil with one arm broken and useless and the blood streaming down one side of his face. Then Summertown or somebody smashed the lamp, and I went back to my hotel before the anti-English feeling spread. I believe they were both packed out of the country next day, but it's a marvel that there was anything to pack. I tell you the story in case you feel disposed to deliver a speech on the independence of Bohemia or anything of that kind."

Yolande laughed and shook her head.

"Too tired and lazy, thanks," she said. Then she lowered her voice. "But *you* might go round and repeat that story the other side of the partition; I'm afraid it couldn't have been heard, and there's a man there growling and grousing and finding fault in a way that makes me blush for my country."

She stopped to listen again, but the storm was spent, and only an occasional rumble of discontent made itself heard.

"Oh, it's gone down appallingly since the old days," narrated the voice. "The first time I was here must have been twenty, nearly five and twenty years ago. I came with old George Parsons—he's dead now, poor fellow; died of sunstroke in India—and we made up our minds to see life. Well, in those days there was a celebrated French actress called—it wasn't Celestine, but it might have been. Christine? No, it wasn't Christine. She died ten years ago on the night of her benefit, when she was leaving the stage to marry George Conolly. It's curious how he met her. As you know, he's one of the Durham Conollys—the people who own the mines——"

Raymond rose silently and bent down to his niece.

"I should have recognised the manner," he whispered, "even if I hadn't spotted the voice. I'm going to interrupt."

"But, uncle, you mustn't!" answered Yolande, who also had recognised the voice. "They're on their honeymoon."

"A man has no business to murder a story even on a honeymoon. Come on."

He finished his coffee and walked boldly round the partition to the table where Sidney Dawson and his wife were seated. Both were in travelling clothes, Sidney's lacking their usual spruceness, and Idina looked tired and white, as she sat resting her cheek on her hand and nodding perfunctorily at each new movement in her husband's story. At sight of Raymond both jumped to their feet with exclamations of surprise. For a moment surprise mingled with resentment on Sidney's face, as though he felt that a honeymoon, however much prolonged, should be inviolable, but Idina was already making room for the newcomers, and he collected two more chairs and offered an adequate welcome.

"You're quite the last people we expected to meet," said Raymond, as he settled himself.

Idina's cheeks were pink with pleasure, and her eyes shone.

"It *is* nice to meet friends!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here? We only arrived to-day."

For a while there was a quick exchange of questions and answers. The Dawsons had started out to Constantinople and were making their way slowly home through Greece and up the Danube from Pesth. They had not decided on their next stopping-place, as Sidney could not make up his mind whether to try a cure at Marienbad or to return to his own doctor in London. Undoubtedly, as he told Yolande, there was something wrong; he had lost his appetite, though, to be sure, for years he had not eaten enough to keep a sparrow alive; he could not sleep, even the three or four hours to which he had gradually sunk; sudden attacks of giddiness, too, were becoming more frequent. . . . And his nerves were out of order. . . . Yolande listened patiently with one ear, trying with the other to catch what Idina was saying to Raymond.

"But, in spite of it all, you must have had a wonderful time," she broke in at length. "I envy you."

"Wonderful!" Idina echoed.

"Of course, I remember the places before they were over-run by tourists," said Sidney grudgingly. "In the old days—take this place, for instance; trams on the Ring-Strasse——"

"Lethal chamber," murmured Raymond.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said that the people who started them were only fit for a lethal chamber," Raymond explained hurriedly. Then he looked from bride to bridegroom. "Well, married life seems to suit you, and I ask you to accept my best wishes for all happiness. Now——"

"But you're not going?"

All the animation died out of Idina's face, and she was pouting with disappointment. For more than two months she and Sidney had travelled alone and lived alone in big hotels, where she was never allowed the opportunity of seeking acquaintances in the public rooms. In part her husband wished the honeymoon to be a royal progress with such ease, comfort and luxury as money could buy; in part he wanted to keep to himself the prize which he had so painfully won. On steamers and in other places, he had noticed a tendency among their fellow travellers to engage Idina in conversation and to look at her with a familiarity which he had the best grounds for resenting. At Malta, where he took her to lunch on board the "Alligator," he had been compelled to speak rather sharply to one silly boy. . . .

Raymond spread out his hands with a gesture of urbanity.

"I don't *want* to go, I need hardly say," he told her. "But I gathered from my niece, before we broke in on you, that I was doing the wrong thing. So naturally——"

He shrugged his shoulders and sat down again. Sidney looked closely for a moment from Raymond to his wife and then took out his watch.

"I'm not sure that *we* shan't have to be moving," he said. "It's a bit chilly to be sitting about in the open. In the old days I never felt the cold—wore the same thickness of underclothes summer and winter, you know, always took my cold tub in the morning——"

Idina's sudden look of disappointment and loneliness had not been lost on Raymond, and he turned to her with the air of an inspiration.

"Why not go somewhere under cover?" he suggested. "You're not too tired? Good. Dawson, what about the *Oiseau Bleu?* Your wife will be able to hear some real gipsy music there. Or perhaps you know a better place."

Sidney hesitated and lost his opportunity.

"All the best places are shut down," he complained. "There used to be a cabaret off the Roten-Sturm called—no, I can't remember the name for the moment, but I see there's a horrible Automat restaurant there now. The *Oiseau Bleu* is this side of the Ballplatz, isn't it? You won't get a real Hungarian orchestra there; they don't exist nowadays, it's all faked for American visitors. But, if anyone *likes* that kind of thing——"

He sent Raymond ahead to lead the way, elaborately giving an arm to his own wife. Throughout the honeymoon he had found Idina fascinating, fairy-like, a woman for whom men would sacrifice empires, responsive to his moods, appreciative and sympathetic. So she had continued until that night, but the appearance of Raymond and Yolande had stimulated her to a height of fascination which she had never shewn him, of which he would not have believed her capable. By comparison she might have been dull before—might have found him dull. . . .

His mind went back to an interview with his sister the day before his marriage. He had gone down to Sussex, nominally to collect clothes and to warn her that she must move out of the Grange before his return, in reality to punish her for her treatment of Idina. He had gone richly prepared with speeches and had laid siege to the house with great pomp. All that he now remembered, however, was that his sister had marched out with full honours of war. There was no fool like an old fool, she began with a cheerful affectation of sorrow, but it would interest her to know why, precisely, he thought Idina was marrying him. There followed a damaging inventory of his physical characteristics and personal habits, ending with a succession of gloomy prognostications. How long could he keep level with a girl less than half his age? How could an elderly invalid curb her from running wild—especially with the knowledge that he already had of her? All right! All right! She wasn't saying anything, she wasn't insinuating anything. All she meant was that the girl was pretty in her way; young men would want to meet her at dances and put their arms round her waist; that sort of thing ended in but one way; everyone knew what young men were. . . . She pursued Sidney into his dressing-room and camped on a chair by the door, with her hands primly clasped in her lap and her pale eyes brightly malevolent. Her brother flung coats and boats into a top-heavy pile and affected to disregard her. "I was in London last week," she went on, when all else failed. "I asked Madame Christine what she thought of it, and Estelle—she was the medium, you know, that day—Estelle said that your friend Captain Melville was trying to reach you. When the message came—you won't like it, but it's my duty to tell you—Captain Melville said, 'Poor old Sid! He may be her first, but he won't be her last by all the gods.' You remember his curious way of saying 'by all the gods.' It gave me the queerest turn."

Once inside the cabaret and face to face with a white-haired, middle-aged man of impeccable respectability, Sidney felt that he had been unduly nervous. He felt also, however, that Idina's youth and inexperience stood in need of protection. . . . Again and again he wondered why she had flagged in the last few weeks. . . .

As soon as their eyes were used to the blazing white and gold after the half-darkness of the streets, Raymond made his way to an empty table at the back of the room. On the long sofas under the Degas prints on the walls lounged a broken row of officers in uniform, women in bright colours, and men in evening dress. A muffled metallic rattle, punctuated by rings of a bell, came from the bar, where a jaded American tender in shirt sleeves and white apron mechanically shook cocktails and as mechanically recorded the score. The Hungarian orchestra, swarthy, broad-nosed and beady-eyed, was temporarily at rest, but one guest after another made his way to the leader and stated his choice.

"How long is it since you left England?" Idina inquired of Yolande. "I wrote to you from Athens to say that we'd met Professor Manisty and that he sent you all sorts of messages. Did you get my letter?"

"I expect it's waiting for me at home," Yolande answered carelessly. "You know he's starting back quite soon? He has to be formally installed in the Lancing Chair of Archæology."

Idina was silent for many moments.

"You make me feel quite homesick," she said at length. "How are Sir Aylmer and everybody? It seems ages since I was at Aston Ripley."

"I think they're all about the same," Yolande answered, "but I've not been invited there since the quarrel; hardly anyone has, in fact. Every week or two Sir Aylmer gets one of these awful attacks, and you think he *must* die, but he seems to pull round by sheer force of will. It's really terrible to think of him lying there, refusing to die, while Deryk, who can be every bit as obstinate when he likes, refuses to see him; I believe Sir Aylmer would sacrifice everything he's got to bring Deryk back. And the awful thing, though I've never breathed this to a soul, is that *I* persuaded him to run away and I can't persuade him to return."

She sighed and abandoned the discussion, leaning back in her corner and watching the crowded, swiftly changing room through half-closed eyes. A moment later she was startled to find Idina's head confidentially close to her own and to hear her voice, sunk to a whisper and discreetly non-committal in tone or use of words.

"How is he?" she began; and, when Yolande hesitated, "I don't know how much you know, but I'm— However he may have treated me, you know. We'd been brought up together all our lives, nearly."

Yolande still hesitated.

"I hardly know what to say," she answered at length. "You see, I *do* know most of the story, but not quite all. You—you pretty well smashed up poor old D., you know. After he got your letter——"

Idina's lips parted in surprise.

"But it was *he*——"

Unperceived by the men, Yolande contrived to find Idina's hand and press it.

"My dear, we shan't do a bit of good by discussing it," she whispered gently. "There was some misunderstanding—no, please, I don't want to hear about it—and you broke apart——"

"He lied to me," Idina interrupted with sudden, unexpected anger that flushed her cheeks.

Yolande shook her head.

"He couldn't, if he tried. I know *most* of his bad qualities. We really oughtn't to discuss it, but, in justice to him, he gave you every ounce of love that he had got in him; and so—I'm not blaming you, I don't know the facts—it was a frightful shock and it's bound to make some difference to his life. You asked how he was, and, well, that's how he is."

Idina had a defence on her lips, but it was interrupted by the arrival of the waiter with their supper. While the others ate and talked, she played with her food an dthought once more, in a fever of self-justification, of the stages by which Deryk's affection had waned and died; the stages, too, by which she had discovered the waning.

"You *think* he was in earnest," she began again in a whisper, as soon as her husband and Raymond were deep in conversation.

Yolande turned to her compassionately.

"What good shall we do by talking about it?" she asked. "I've said more than I meant to, as it is. Don't think I'm blaming you!"

"But you've accused me of not doing him justice," Idina returned combatively.

"My dear, *I* advised him to break free from Sir Aylmer the moment he fell in love with you. I saw him when he was working himself to death in London; I know that he adored you and that no other woman ever entered his head. And I saw him two days after he got your letter. But what does it matter who was right or wrong? The thing's passed out of our control."

For the rest of the evening Idina hardly spoke, and Yolande watched her with a pain at her heart, wondering what she was thinking. Supper came to an end, their neighbours gradually scattered, and still the reverie continued unbroken, so that, when Sidney wanted to go home, he had to address her three times.

"I'm sorry! I was sleepy, I suppose," she exclaimed, rallying with an effort that Yolande alone saw. "Yes, we ought to be going home; it's really late. Miss Stornaway, it's been delightful, meeting you like this; I do hope you'll let me come and see you, when we're back in London."

They exchanged their farewells, but, while Raymond and Sidney disputed the privilege of paying the bill, Idina hung behind with Yolande.

"You'll be seeing Deryk, when you bet back?" she began hurriedly.

"I'm not going to give him any message," Yolande answered.

"You can tell him that I—wronged him," Idina pleaded with lowered eyes.

"But what *good* can it do?" asked Yolande for the sixth time.

The men were awaiting them, and Idina, smiling goodbye, hastened forward. On reaching her hotel, she complained of feeling tired and left Sidney to smoke his final cheroot by himself. She had undressed and brushed her hair and was already in bed, when he came up, and with eyes nearly closed, feigning sleep, she watched the light from his dressing-room shining through the open door and throwing gigantic shadows on to the walls. A grotesque black figure, with preposterous gestures, folded smoke-laden clothes and with vast, sweeping movements washed face and combed hair. Growing fainter but more enormous, it advanced into her room and borrowed a manicure-set from her dressing-table. Substance and shadow were now both within her vision, and, as he turned, the light blazed mercilessly on to his sloping shoulders and wrinkled neck.

"Asleep, Idina?" he asked, looking closely at her.

A drowsy murmur escaped her lips, and, uncertain whether she was wide enough awake to attend to him, he made shift with talking to himself.

"The beauty of these electric lights is that they're hung so that you get no light anywhere that you want it. In the old days of candles—" With an impatient exclamation he threw down the manicure set with a clatter, turned off the light, kissed his wife on the forehead and clambered into bed.

4

Yolande was hardly to see the Dawsons again until their return to England two months later. From motives which she did not trouble to analyse and in disobedience to her own precepts she called at their hotel and was disappointed to find that they were out. Idina wrote a letter of effusive thanks for the call and suggested times and places for meeting, but it was only on the day of their departure from Vienna that they had a moment's conversation in the Graben. Sidney was buying cigars, and, when he had dropped out of earshot for a moment, Idina turned to Yolande with an air of embarrassed obstinacy.

"I want you to give him that message, you know. It won't do any *good* exactly, but you told me that he was taking it to heart. He can at least know that I'm sorry to have misjudged him."

"I shan't even say I've seen you," Yolande answered with no less obstinacy. "Of course, if he ever asks me whether we've met, I shall tell him about it, but you and he are not likely to cross each other's paths, and it's better that you shouldn't even think of each other. You closed the chapter once, and there's nothing to be gained by reopening it."

The conversation was interrupted by the emergence of Sidney from the shop. Yolande said good-bye and made her way back to her hotel, where she found her uncle and invited his opinion whether the Dawson marriage was likely to be a success.

"I'm prejudiced," she admitted, "because I love *her;* she's such a soft, affectionate, tender little thing, even if there's not a great lot inside her head; *he* always gives me cold shivers. She seemed so bored, as if she had lost all interest in life."

"Look her up in London," Raymond counselled. "You're the only friend of her own age that she's got. I really didn't have much chance of observing her that night: Dawson was so full of his own complaints."

"I had my share of it," Yolande protested ruefully. "I wonder what would happen, if he ever had anything *really* wrong with him."

Raymond answered with an irrelevancy and took her in to luncheon. Sidney's health was probably for once not a matter for scepticism, and the diagnosis of a physician in Buda Pesth had been disquieting; for the moment Sidney held no opinion of his own, but he was going from Vienna to Marienbad for a second opinion and, perhaps, a course. The trouble might be functional or it might be organic; either was serious, but with the one he could look forward with prudence to years of life; with the other—Sidney shrugged his shoulders, as he recalled the hesitating English of the Hungarian doctor; after all, it was no good taking a second opinion, if you were going to frighten yourself to death with the first. But it could not be denied that he, the thinnest of men normally, was growing so fat that casual acquaintances commented on the change and, ironically enough, told him that he was looking better.

Yolande found no need for thinking what to say or leave unsaid at her next meeting with Deryk, as he made no reference to Idina. They met by chance in the Park one afternoon and sat down for a moment's conversation before returning to work. Deryk was looking appreciably older than at their last meeting; there were lines at the corners of his eyes, and the eyes themselves, deep in their sockets, burned with feverish restlessness. Yolande took him in hand with her customary decision and told him that he was killing himself.

"You will persist in thinking that I've got something to live for," he answered with polite boredom.

"Are you *trying* to kill yourself?"

"My dear Yolande, I hardly ever *try* to do anything nowadays; it's too much trouble, and one nearly always fails. This week I tried to break myself of all my bad habits and I can't make two efforts in one week."

"Not if you tried the first seriously," she answered.

Deryk, sitting with closed eyes, shrugged his shoulders lazily.

"I forget whether I got rid of the habits or found I hadn't got any," he answered. "The result, of course, is the same. By the way, I've finished the proofs of my book, and it's coming out in November."

"You're running away, Deryk. We were discussing your evil mode of life generally."

"But I thought I'd disposed of that. Anyway it required an exhibition of iron will to finish that book. God! I was bored before I'd done with it—and that's a good quality, one of my best."

He smiled unsatisfactorily at his own thoughts. Half-heartedly he had slipped into an alliance with Lucile Welman, recognising that there was no love to gild an artificial passion; he had been half-heartedly ashamed of himself from the first, but too half-hearted to leave her. For several weeks they had lived less than a mile apart on the river, meeting every evening before dinner and dragging out hours of commonplace tenderness which had all been used before. Twice Deryk had lost patience with this woman who was bound to him by nothing but ties of furtive passion; he had threatened to close the bungalow and go back to town; twice she had cried and told him that he was breaking her heart; and to stay there was to follow the line of least resistance. . . . Yesterday, however, ordinary impatience became merged in active distaste for the woman; he was tired of her and disgusted with himself. His self-respect had been sacrificed on her altar, and, as he could not win it back, she was welcome to it; but he would sink no lower. Their intimacy was at an end, and she might cry her eyes out or, better still, look round for someone else. There would be successors, as there had been predecessors. He tormented himself by comparing his conduct of a year ago with his conduct of to-day, when he and Lucile dodged behind an island to escape being seen by Sir Adolf Erckmann, as Lucile and Erckmann had no doubt dodged to avoid Lord Pennington's electric launch in earlier days. He had got himself into proud, clean company!

In sudden remorse he turned to his companion.

"I say, Yolande, I don't think we'd better meet, you know. In the old days I was a cut above other people in some things, but I've come down hill pretty rapidly."

The remorse made her almost sorry for the criticism which had evoked it.

"Dear Deryk, you haven't fallen so *very* far, whatever I may say to you. At least, not too far to climb up again. If you'd take yourself in hand——"

"Ah, Yolande! Why won't you do it for me? If I promised to do everything you told me, give up everything, behave as if you were my confessor——"

"You'd be a poor sort of thing. You must work out your own salvation, Deryk—to use one of your father's pet phrases—but I'll help you in any way I can."

He sat lost in reflection for several moments.

"Deganway asked me to share a house with him," he said with apparent irrelevance. "I refused, because I'm too selfish and too jumpy; I know he'd get on my nerves, with his eyeglass and his affectations. I *used* to live with him, too, at one time. . . . Old Bertrand Oakleigh got the President of the Board of Fine Arts to offer me a private secretaryship; I turned that down, because I've lost the habit of work. Such work as I *do* is poor stuff, and I don't care enough to make it better. Why won't you marry me, Yolande, and turn me to some account?"

She answered the question in the same dispassionate tone that he had used.

"Because you don't love me. I can't marry you to—to *rescue* you, though I once came very near it. I'm glad I saw the folly of it in time. Dear old Deryk, you'd be a pretty fine handful at any time, when you can't share a house with this man, can't work with that man, too selfish or lazy for the other—your own words, my dear!—but, if you didn't even love me—and you don't, do you?"

"I—believe I do."

She laughed and laid her hand on his.

"That proves you don't! I sometimes wonder whether you know anything about love. You wanted to be very kind and quixotic about Dina——"

Deryk looked away quickly.

"Let's leave her out," he suggested.

"I'm sorry. Well, you're friends with me and you're attracted by this woman or that, but I don't believe you know the real thing."

"Do you?"

Yolande considered.

"I met a man once who really loved me, but the unfortunate thing was that he never knew it."

"That surely didn't keep you from telling him," Deryk laughed.

"No, I didn't. You see, I didn't want to disturb him. He was doing very good public work, and a wife would simply have got in his way. There's candour for you!"

Deryk looked at his watch and rose hastily to his feet. "I must be getting back!" he exclaimed. "I still keep up this pretence of work, you see. Good-bye, Yolande; you're sure you won't marry me?"

"Not just now," she answered. "But I'll do anything else to help you."

It was time for her, too, to be back at work, but the Park was very seductive in the late summer afternoon light, and she sat on thinking and occasionally smiling at her thoughts. The chair by her side was occupied, vacated and occupied again, but she hardly turned her head until a voice said,

"The L-lion Gate was easy w-work beside this, Miss Stornaway."

"It's the man himself!" she cried. "Goodness! How long have you been sitting there? And the clothes! And that hat! Do you *have* to do this now that you're a professor? I was thinking of you when you spoke."

Felix Manisty bowed low and removed his hat with a flourish. He was ornately dressed in morning coat and black and white check trousers, patent leather boots and a glossy silk hat; lavender gloves and a gold-topped cane lay on his knees; only his face and hands were out of keeping with his general elaboration, and they were burned the colour of terra cotta from exposure to the sun.

"I always thought one had to put on one's b-best clothes for the Park," he explained simply. "Th-that was the theory, when I was an undergraduate."

"Not in October, but that's beside the point, and I oughtn't to make personal remarks. You're looking awfully well, and I'm *jolly* glad to see you. When did you get back?"

"M-Monday," he answered. "I was installed yesterday. Did you get my letter?"

Yolande shook her head.

"I heard of you in Vienna from the Dawsons and I was thinking of you this afternoon, but I've never had a line since you went out. And *I* discovered you: don't you forget that. However, I'm not complaining; you were busy."

The silk hat was grown irksome to him, and he placed it with obvious relief on his knees.

"Yes, I was hard at work," he admitted. "I've found the site of the l-library, and we open it up in the winter, as soon as the malaria is over. If I g-go, that is."

"If!" she echoed.

Manisty drummed a reflective tattoo on the top of his hat.

"I'm not going out there alone again," he said firmly.

"Well, take Deryk Lancing. I wanted to talk to you about him."

"L-later," Manisty begged. "I'm—not—g-going out there alone."

Yolande looked at him with surprised amusement.

"But you've done it a dozen—twenty times before!" she cried.

"I didn't know you then," Manisty explained.

"It must be the clothes," said Yolande lightly, though she felt herself absurdly bathed in sudden warmth. "You never used to talk like this in the dear shabby days. Dr.—I *beg* your pardon!—*Professor* Manisty, I wonder if you have any conception what you looked like that day on the Terrace when you undressed in full sight of St. Thomas' Hospital."

Manisty sighed and shook his head.

"We s-seem to be getting away from the p-point," he urged. "Will you come out to Hellenopolis th-this autumn?"

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"My dear Professor, I *can't.*"

"B-but you don't understand; I want you to marry me. I w-wish you'd had that letter of mine; I put it quite plainly there, but I suppose I must have forgotten to p-post it. You know the w-worst, of course; I'm over forty and b-bald and I c-can't tie a tie and I've no small talk, but I'm quite a good sort, you know; I should be awfully k-kind to you."

Yolande's eyes suddenly filled with tears, and she looked away.

"You're a dear," she whispered, "but I'm not going to marry you. I'm never going to marry anyone. We'll go on being great friends——"

"But that's no g-good!" he interrupted. "If you stay here, I obviously can't go back alone to that ghastly p-place."

"Why not?

"'That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture! . . .'"

"G-go on," said Manisty, bowing his appreciation of grand lines rarely delivered.

"'He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping;
"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
Show me their shaping,
Those who most studied man, the bard and sage—
Give!" So they gowned him.'"

Quickly, unstammeringly and with unaffected wistfulness Manisty capped the quotation:

"'Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain;
"Time to taste life," another would have said,
Up with the curtain!'

"Why did you quote those l-lines, Miss Stornaway?"

Yolande turned on him with a defiant out-thrust of a determined chin.

"Because you're a man, and Fate made me a girl, and I despise a man who loses faith in his work or himself."

"I've not l-lost faith," Manisty remonstrated. "But my w-work's not enough in itself. L-look here, I'm as sane as I ever was, even though sane men don't dig up buried c-cities; I w-want you to marry me, because I'm in love with you. I'm over forty and I'm not g-going to waste any more of my l-life. I'm not g-going——" He broke off desperately. "It's no g-good, I knew I c-couldn't say it. L-let me see if I can't find that l-letter!"

Throughout their conversation Yolande had walked on a knife-edge between laughter and tears. She leaned across and laid her hand on his sleeve.

"I don't want the letter. And you mustn't talk about this again."

"I can't g-go out there without you," he repeated obstinately. "I—the whole trouble started when we met; I g-got used to having someone to tell my secrets to, but it was only when I went b-back—My God! I did miss you. Child, why won't you marry me?"

Yolande smiled at him compassionately.

"Suppose I said I didn't love you?" she suggested.

Manisty traced a pattern in the gravel with the end of his cane. Then he replaced his hat on his head and stood up.

"Yes. I hadn't thought of that," he said gravely.

"But have I ever said or done anything——?" she began in agony.

He shook his head.

"No. I'd quite forgotten about that s-side; I was thinking only of myself. I must s-seem very vain."

He held out his hand, looking at her in perplexity, as though uncertain whether her refusal meant that they were never to meet again, anxious, too, to grave the memory of her auburn hair and grey eyes upon his mind.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"I don't know. I want to think. You don't suppose you're likely to g-get to love me?" he enquired diffidently.

Yolande had to lower her eyes before his.

"It isn't that!" she said. "I should be in your way, you'd get slack——"

The outstretched hand closed on her wrist.

"Are you re-reconsidering?" he demanded excitedly. "I don't know, you see; I've never asked anyone to marry me before——"

"My dear! you needn't tell me that!" Yolande interrupted with a little sob.

5

"There's no more work to be done to-day," Yolande told herself when the time came for her to say good-bye to Felix Manisty. She was a little sorry to find her brain and nerves in any way excited or rebellious, as she had decided from the first that, unlike other people, she would behave rationally throughout her engagement. In a spirit of pure reason and with becoming calm of manner, she called upon her uncle in his big, wind-swept office in Hampstead and mentioned casually that she had a piece of news to give him. Raymond looked at her, kissed her and then held her pressed close to him while for some unaccountable reason she cried as if her heart were breaking.

"I can't help it, uncle dear," she whispered convulsively. "I feel so happy; and I seem to have gone all limp."

"Don't try, my dear," he advised her. "But I think you're all right again now, and I'm going to make a magic with some cold water and a little eau-de-cologne for bathing your eyes. Your miserable sex always faints or has a headache, so I keep a permanent supply of brandy and scent in the office. When that's done, you can tell me what your news is: you haven't so far, you know."

"I *think* you can guess," she answered with a smile. "And, oh, you must go down and explain to father that Felix is all right; he'll never believe it from me, I'm always so unpopular at home. Rub in the professorship, but don't talk about archæology or digging or Asia. Dear father's so practical at times; he might want to know what good it all was. Now I won't waste any more of your time."

She tried to get away, but the uncle persisted in standing, with her hands in his, looking at her pensively and a little mournfully.

"I believe you really *are* going to be happy," he said at length.

"I should hope I am," she answered.

"Don't take it as a matter of course. It's not so common as you think at this moment. Some don't marry at all, many marry the wrong people. I think you're all right. Good-bye, my blessed chick."

Raymond watched her walking away and ran his fingers impatiently through his hair. He could not understand why he was appreciating only for the first time that henceforth he would stand second in his niece's affections.

On leaving Hampstead, Yolande made her way to Eaton Square and paid her long-promised call on the Dawsons. The hint of melancholy in Raymond's voice, her own sense of welling tenderness towards mankind, the caprice of an unexpectedly idle afternoon contributed to her decision. Imagining—for some insufficient reason—that she would find Idina alone, she arrived in the workaday clothes which she had put on that morning; she was conventional enough to feel a little dismayed when she discovered the drawing-room full of visitors. Idina was so obviously pleased to see her, however, that she forgot her momentary embarrassment and settled down ungrudgingly to the wholly uncongenial task of rescuing an "at home" from failure. Idina, it was clear, had never before handled a similar gathering and stood bewilderedly penned in a corner, while an elderly aunt of her husband emitted family history. The other guests remained aloof and unwelded, and Sidney's utility was exhausted when he had strutted up with an air of proprietorship, introducing one guest after another to his wife, and had subsequently repeated to every man in the room,

"Give you a whisky and soda downstairs, if you don't care about tea. Can't stand it myself, but then I've no inside. I say, old man, it's awfully good of you to come to a gloomy gathering like this; one's womenkind seem to like it, and there's an end to the matter. It's a long time since I saw anything of you: we really lost touch when you married and left London."

After her second hearing of this speech Yolande found her bearings in the stiff, formal gathering that harmonised so exquisitely with the massive mid-Victorian furniture and decoration of the room. Sidney had exhumed the sobered friends of his reckless youth, and they were come with their wives to witness unregenerate Sidney's belated conversion, to see, too, how he had fared in the great gamble. The wives were middle-aged, heavy and settled; one or two allowed a hint of disapproval and jealousy to be seen; the rest, when she had escaped from the elderly aunt, advised Idina gravely on life in general and in particular the care of a household, talking through her and over her head, calling for confirmation, confiding experiences and comparing notes. Sitting or standing surrounded by them, slender, fair haired and warmly flushed, Idina with her startled eyes looked like a strayed wood-nymph made prisoner by a gathering of philosophers who were not prepared to believe in wood-nymphs.

Yolande ruthlessly broke her way into the ring and scattered the party into a dozen groups of two or three. Gliding from one to another she galvanised them into a dozen different affectations of interest, breaking up and re-sorting the groups, like a ballet master, until she had arrived at temperamental harmony.

"My dear, I had three years of it with Mother's parties before I ran away," she explained to Idina, when they were alone for a moment. "You'll find it quite easy, if you're sufficiently brutal; dragoon your people, and you can make them think they've enjoyed themselves, but don't go in simply for being charming, or your party gets out of control. For one thing, you can't get rid of it."

Idina smiled with tired gratitude.

"Thank you for coming, Miss Stornaway," she said. "I wasn't enjoying it very much before."

"Why don't you call me 'Yolande'? Everybody does, you know. I want to be friends and I shall be coming to you for all sorts of advice soon. You may not believe it, but I'm going to be married."

"Oh, who to?" Idina cried excitedly; and then with a change of tone, "Not Deryk?"

Yolande shook her head unsmilingly.

"Not Deryk," she said. "Dr. Manisty, the excavator. I don't know whether you met him at Ripley Court in the winter. You mustn't tell anyone yet, because it's only just been arranged and I haven't told even my father yet. Wish me luck, Dina."

"I wish you all possible happiness," said Idina almost inaudibly. "Do you think you can bring him to dine here? I should like to meet him."

"I'll *make* him!" Yolande laughed. "And that reminds me——"

"Is he very much in love with you?" Idina interrupted, pursuing her own line of thought.

"I *hope* so."

Idina was silent for a while.

"And are you as much in love with him?" she asked at length.

"Of course I am! I shouldn't be marrying him otherwise. But I don't want to talk about myself any more, because I've got to go. Will you choose some day to come and dine with Uncle Raymond? He wants you both to come, but I always look after his invitations, so I'm asking you. And then will you both come and eat the most primitive meal imaginable in my flat? And, one thing more, are you going to dances at all? I want you to come with my party to the Albert Hall in the first week of November; it's fancy dress, and uncle Raymond's getting it up for one of his million charities. It ought to be rather fun."

Slowly Idina's head turned towards her husband.

"It really depends on Sidney," she said uncertainly. "He's not been at all well lately."

Yolande knew enough of Sidney's hypochondria to be sceptical.

"He's *looking* very well," she objected. "And he's surely much stouter than he used to be; he does you credit."

Idina did not wince, but her eyelids flickered.

"The doctors are rather worried about him," was all that she would say. "But I should love to come, if he'll let me. May I tell you in a day or two?"

Yolande nodded and kissed her good-bye. As she went away, a feeling of exhaustion and depression bore her down, as though she had spent the afternoon manufacturing bright conversation for an invalid. Idina herself, with her deathly listlessness, was sufficiently pitiful, but the setting of middle-aged friends, the lifeless conversation, the pantaloon quips of Sidney heightened the gloom and offended against her first romantic canons. A young bride should come home—with a young husband—to a new house still pleasantly redolent of paint and decorated with the curtains and cushions that the two of them had spent delightful weeks in choosing; and there should be impossible wedding-presents everywhere, and the friends of both should be making them dine out every evening. "I worked off *three* invitations," she interjected to herself, "and I'm fairly sure that they're the only three the wretched child's had." And they ought to have been too poor to furnish the whole house at once, and there should have been hours of happy contrivance, and the first year should have been a glorious and rather uncomfortable adventure, so that they could look back their lives through and reconstruct all with a "Do you remember—?" to start them—exactly as she and darling Felix were going to do. . . . For completeness and unswerving finality a Victorian undertaker might have prepared the house in Eaton Square.

Yolande sighed, looked at her watch and walked towards Deryk's new rooms in Bury Street. When he gave up saving money, he had moved into a comfortable bachelor suite within a stone's throw of his club, with a piano, a telephone and a shamefacedly discreet landlord, who valeted him. She screwed up her courage on the way there to the disagreeable task of bearing him the tidings of her engagement; believing that she knew all that was to be known of Deryk; she was satisfied that he did not really want to marry her, but that he would be, temporarily at least, infuriated by the idea of her marrying anyone else.

He was sitting at the piano with his head thrown back and his eyes half closed, when she came in. The rustle of her dress, more than her warning tap on the door, made him turn, and he welcomed her with a surprised smile.

"I never expected to see *you,*" he said. "What do you think of the rooms? This is your first visit, of course."

The room in question was small and rather overcrowded with a sofa, table, two large armchairs and a small-sized grand piano; it was comfortable, at the same time, and, as Deryk explained proudly, a man could reach almost anything without getting up. A second sitting-room opened out of the first, and on the far side was Deryk's bedroom.

"I like them," she said. "And it must be so useful to have two doors to every room and all the rooms opening out of each other. There's really no excuse for being caught by people you don't want to see—unless, of course, you give yourself away by playing the piano. The furniture I hate quite a lot; I suppose that's your landlord's."

"Yes, I couldn't afford to refurnish. At least, I *could,* but it would have meant too much extra work."

Yolande nodded and continued her inspection of the room, glancing with disfavour at the conventional pictures of girls in déshabillé smoking cigarettes or dozing in front of unnaturally red fires. At another time Deryk would not have consented to live a single day with such tawdry suggestiveness smirking at him from the walls, but he had evidently decided that it was too much trouble to change the furniture or vary the decoration. In no other way than by the betrayal of a new-born lethargy and indifference had he succeeding in impressing his personality upon his surroundings.

"Seeing how little work you're doing now, I wish you'd try to turn out better stuff," she said, coming to a standstill in front of the bookcase and running her eye over the titles. "I shouldn't think you're exactly proud of some of your recent articles."

Deryk assumed a disdainful defensive.

"I get paid the same whether they're good or bad, so why waste decent work?"

"But, if you write too much bad stuff, you'll destroy your own market, my friend. I suppose you can now place your stuff without any difficulty, as much as you can put on the market. You won't always be able to, if you go on getting consistently more slipshod. And, of course, it's frightfully demoralising to turn out admittedly tenth-rate work."

"I feel too much contempt for the whole work to take it seriously," Deryk answered lazily. "And I don't think I mind being demoralised."

"I thought you wanted me to take you in hand and make something of you," she reminded him reproachfully.

"Yes, and you turned me down." He played softly, more to himself and his mood than with any idea that she was listening. "Yolande, I've got over my old smash-up; I don't talk about it and I don't think about it more than I need, but I've put it in its place. I'm in a decent frame of mind for once and I'll do almost anything you tell me—except go to Ripley Court, of course. I wish to God you'd find me something to do and make me do it! It's so frightfully easy to make just enough money to keep going, and I can't and won't work without an object. I wish you'd marry me. That's the second time I've proposed to you to-day."

Yolande crossed the room and knelt on the sofa, resting her arms on the piano.

"I can't, Deryk."

"But why not?" he drawled, with a guarded, half-serious smile.

"Because—" She paused undecided. "I say, Deryk, we've always been good friends, haven't we? Well, I want you to be one of the first to know, *because* we've always been friends. I'm—I've just *got* engaged to be married, Deryk."

His right hand crashed on to the keys, and he jumped to his feet.

"Engaged?"

She nodded.

"To Felix Manisty. Deryk dear, don't look so surprised; it isn't flattering."

For a moment he seemed not to have heard her. Then he forced a wintry smile and held out his hand.

"Manisty's a good fellow," he said. "And a jolly lucky fellow. I hope you're going to be very happy."

He disengaged his hand as quickly as he could and walked to the window. Yolande gave him a moment to himself and then crept behind and slipped her arm through his.

"It isn't going to make any difference to *us,*" she whispered. "We shall be just as good friends——"

He shook his head.

"You can't help it," he said shortly. "I shall miss you, Yolande."

"But you'll see as much of me as you ever have or ever want to!" she cried.

" 'Tain't the same thing. I shall always be second. I wonder if you know the sort of thing you've meant to me?" he went on slowly. "You've got the cleanest soul of anyone I know; I'd as soon think of trying to kiss you as I would of trying to put a knife into your ribs; and sometimes—God knows I haven't run straight—but sometimes I've at least had the decency to feel what a swine you'd think me, if you knew anything about it. I put you on a kind of pedestal in my mind . . . Remember I told you this afternoon that you'd better drop me." He sighed and began walking up and down the room. "Oh, well! Can't be helped! I say again, I hope you'll both be very happy. Thank Heaven you're marrying because you want to."

Yolande looked at the clock and began to draw on her gloves.

"I shan't be happy if you're going to let it make any difference to our friendship," she said; and then with a transparent assumption of gaiety, "I shall tease you and abuse you as I've always done. And you'll come to me—at least I shall be frightfully offended, if you don't—whenever you're in difficulties. No, don't be impatient, Deryk. I know much more about you than perhaps you think. I know how hard it must be to live with anyone as strong-willed as your father; I know how awful it must be to have millions and millions of pounds just waiting for you so that there's no particular reason for doing anything; I know a bit about the smash-up. You haven't had an easy time, old man, but there's still a great deal of work waiting to be done in the world."

He walked reflectively to and fro with his hands locked behind his back; Yolande touched him on the shoulder with her finger-tips and slipped noiselessly out of the room. Turning to the window, he was waiting to see her come out into the street, when the door opened and his landlord advanced, with the air of a conspirator, two steps into the room.

"A lady has called to see you, sir," he announced confidentially. "I said you were engaged, sir, and she's waiting in the dining room."

"I can't see her, I'm busy," Deryk answered.

"I *said* you were *out,* sir, but she said she'd wait till you came in, as it was very important."

After a moment's indecision Deryk sighed impatiently.

"Oh, shew her in!" he exclaimed. "Come back in five minutes and say that you were to remind me that I'm dining at eight."

The landlord withdrew, to reappear and usher Mrs. Welman into the room.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mr. Lancing," she began; and then, when the door had closed, "Oh, Deryk, don't be angry with me! I couldn't, couldn't keep away."

Deryk ostentatiously looked at his watch.

"I've got to dress in about two minutes," he told her. "You said there was something important." A gleam of white shewed him that she was biting her lip, and the sight angered him. "I told you yesterday that I'd got work to do."

She came up to him and laid her hands on his shoulders, looking beseechingly into his eyes.

"Please, Deryk!"

"Something important," he reminded her.

"You're not, not going to send me away?"

"I've come back to London to work; and I can't work if we're always meeting and writing and ringing each other up."

She withdrew her hands and looked down.

"I'm sorry—if I've—wasted your time," she said. "I had better say good-bye. Try not to despise me too, too much, Deryk."

The note of humility rallied him to a certain bluff kindliness.

"I don't despise you, Lucile."

"You're sorry you ever met me."

"We should both be happier if we hadn't," he suggested uneasily.

She nodded wistfully.

"You despise yourself for ever, ever caring for me; and you despise me for falling in love with you and forgetting—oh, it doesn't help to talk about it. Try to think kindly of me, Deryk."

There was a knock at the door, and the landlord delivered his pre-arranged message. Deryk thanked him and compared his watch with the clock on the mantelpiece.

"I shall always think kindly of you," he answered.

"Ah, you saw that! But you're tired of me——"

"I only said that I'd got work to do and that I couldn't do it at Maidenhead."

"And, when you've done the work, are you going to let me see you again?"

Deryk hesitated and shrugged his shoulders.

"Better not," he counselled her.

"Very well." She turned to the door, but came back at the last moment and threw her arms round his neck. "Oh, my darling, you don't really mean it! You're not going to turn me away! You can't, Deryk, you mustn't!

You don't know what you are to me. Say you'll let me see you again." She pressed her lips to his ear. "Say you will, sweetheart, say you will!"

As once before, Deryk seemed to look down on himself from outside and direct the movements of a puppet in his own image. He was entirely self-controlled and bored, yet interested.

"We shall both regret it," he whispered with patient reasonableness. "It's bound to come to an end."

"But not yet!"

He tried to liberate himself from her arms.

"Why not face the position?" he cried with a note of resignation, almost of despair.

"Because I can't bear it, darling. Say you'll let me come and see you just once. I don't ask more than once."

"It won't stop at once," he answered, caressing her cheek with one hand. "Why won't you be sensible, Lucile?"

"I don't want to be! I love you, I love you."

Deryk sighed helplessly and bent down to let her kiss him.

CHAPTER V

RECOVERY

"'Make-believe. Make-believe.' The phrase . . . haunted me as I walked homeward alone. I went to my room and stood before my desk and surveyed papers and files and Margaret's admirable equipment of me.

"I perceived . . . that so it was Mr. George Alexander would have mounted a statesman's private room. . . ."

H. G. Wells: The New Machiavelli.

I

In the first week of November Raymond Stornaway's costume ball, advertised in every paper and on every hoarding, took place at the Albert Hall. He and his staff had worked indefatigably for months, and in the last week or two before the ball his whole time was given up to it, and his friends lost sight of him even at meals. His only holiday was when he motored Yolande down to her father's house and remained conveniently near in case Lord Stornaway (or anyone else) shewed any tendency to make a fool of himself, when the engagement was announced. This duty discharged, he handed out a manual of good advice on houses and flats, furniture and decoration, warned Yolande to expect no practical assistance from her husband, and closed the interview with a cheque which caused her to protest with a gasp that she was marrying only one husband and furnishing only one house.

"Beloved uncle, I think we invite Deryk, don't we?" she asked, when the arrangements for Raymond's own party were under discussion. "We haven't seen him for weeks, and our attitude towards him is rather 'See what baby is doing and tell him not to.' We particularly want him to be friends with Felix."

"You invited the Dawsons for that night," Raymond reminded her.

"But they can't come, or I wouldn't have suggested Deryk. Dina's keeping the tickets and says she may look in for five minutes to see the dresses; she can't leave her husband for more than that. He's been in bed for weeks and seems to be very bad. So it's quite safe to invite Deryk; and, if they meet at the Albert Hall, well, they'll just have to, and it won't be our fault."

Raymond wrinkled his forehead pensively.

"I'm not much of a success with that boy," he had to admit. "When last I heard from Ripley Court, he hadn't been near the place. It's quite ridiculous; he's making a fool of himself. There's not the slightest reason why he shouldn't go down occasionally, especially as it's unlikely that his father will live through the winter. And I don't like the abominable people he goes about with. Yes, invite him, and I'll talk cold sense."

On that promise Yolande issued an invitation and had it refused. She sent a second and reinforced it with a personal call.

"You've got to come, Deryk, so why make a fuss? I'm not going to let you quarrel with me, and uncle Raymond particularly wishes to tell you not to make a fool of yourself. And Felix wants you to come out with us after Christmas."

Deryk smiled lazily and with dwindling resistance.

"I won't go abroad," he said, "but, as I can't stop your uncle calling me names——"

"You richly deserve them, Deryk."

"Admitted. Well, I *am* engaged for dinner that night, but I'll chuck it, if you like. You understand I don't want to come a bit?"

"You have made that quite clear," she answered with good-humour. "We shan't stay more than an hour or two."

On the evening of the ball Raymond in lilac coat, white knee-breeches, wig and sword welcomed his guests and tried to identify their costumes without committing himself finally to an irrevocable blunder. Yolande with bare arms, a winged helmet and two long plaits of hair was an unmistakable Brunhilde, but Felix's sandals, brown robe, tonsured wig and gold-wire halo exposed him to endless controversy.

"N-not Francis of Assisi," he explained patiently. "P-Pancras. Saint and m-martyr. He's not in the Calendar, but the b-books say he was a y-youth of great beauty, who at the age of sixteen——"

"Heavens! Who's this?" Yolande interrupted, clutching at his arm, as a tall figure stalked into the drawing-room. A loose-fitting robe draped him from neck to feet, and his head was hidden by a conical bag with ghostly eye-holes.

"Good evening, Mr. Stornaway," said an affectedly deep voice.

"Good evening. I haven't the least idea who you are," Raymond answered.

There was a ghostly laugh, and one muffled hand twitched the bag away.

"Deryk!" Yolande cried. "What are you? An Inquisitor? I should never have known who it was."

They were interrupted by the arrival of two mutually jealous Columbines, Gerald Deganway as a half-naked *retiarius*—still, to Deryk's disgust, with hair ornately brushed back and eyeglass in play—and George Oakleigh in dress clothes with a coloured cloak fastened, in compromise, round his neck and tucked as far as possible out of sight down his back. While Yolande flitted to and fro, introducing the new-comers and checking their arrival by her list, Raymond drew Deryk into a corner and asked for news of Sir Aylmer.

"I think you'll regret it, if you don't go down to Ripley pretty soon," he said without further skirmishing, when the expected answer had been given. "I told you so one day when you lunched with me in the summer."

"And I told you that I thought the first move ought to come from him," Deryk answered obstinately. "He and Hats mustn't think they can dangle me at the end of a string——"

"Will you go, if he asks you to?" Raymond interrupted. "Mind, I think he behaved like a fool, but, if you *don't* go, I foretell that you'll feel *you* behaved like a fool, too. And that is so damnably uncomfortable for one's pride. Will you go?"

Deryk looked at him suspiciously, scenting an intrigue.

"It depends how he asks me," was all that he would promise.

"Well, that's something," Raymond sighed. "I saw him last week and I doubt if he'll live through the winter. Doesn't feel equal to going out this filthy weather and, equally, doesn't seem able to live without air." He stopped to look closely at Deryk, but there was a supercilious, Roman-like expression on the boy's face. "Not the only death this winter that we've got to expect," he added with a sigh, wrinkling his forehead and staring fixedly at the fire.

"Oh?"

Raymond looked cautiously over one shoulder.

"I don't know that I ought to tell you," he said, "and it certainly mustn't go any further. Sidney Dawson's in a very bad way. He and I saw a good deal of each other as boys, when we were living at your place, and he made me his executor some years ago. I called on him a day or two ago; and I didn't like the look of things a bit."

"But he always looked rather tough!" Deryk exclaimed.

Raymond shook his head.

"There's a weak strain in the family. Tendency to dropsy, you know. Three weeks ago his arms and legs were like bolsters."

Deryk was unaffectedly shocked.

"But—does his wife know?" he asked.

"Can't help it, poor soul. Of course I've no idea how *much* she knows, but yesterday or the day before he was simply living in a bag of water. His eyesight was failing, too. I need hardly say he's frightened to death, but I don't think even *he* knows how bad he is. They were talking about trying a specialist in Naples whom I mentioned to them. In any event——" He left the sentence unfinished and shrugged his shoulders helplessly. The sight and memory of Dawson's affliction weighed upon him until he was glad to share the burden with anyone. A moment later dinner was announced, and Deryk walked in, reflecting in a mood of detached bitterness that this was the kind of price that people had to pay; when the artificial bitterness passed, he indignantly demanded of himself by what right dying men were allowed to marry. Then, with an effort, he dismissed the discussion and its consequences from his mind. As he had told Yolande several weeks ago after their conversation in the park, he had recovered his sense of perspective; he could, if need be, think and speak of Idina dispassionately.

The ball was well begun, when they arrived and fitted themselves into Raymond's box on the first tier, and they had an unhurried hour in which to dance or walk idly round the great hall before their host completed his tour of inspection and returned to collect them for the supper that was already laid at the back of the box. From the far end the music even of a double band sounded muffled and distant; the crowded floor seemed covered with surging waves of colour, mingling, separating and becoming lost like tidal currents. Time and space grew confused and remote, until Yolande, strolling arm-in-arm with Deryk, wondered whether she was awake; her individuality was in danger of being swallowed by proximity to three thousand slowly-moving, fantastically-dressed bodies. When they danced, she found herself dancing; when the distant music quickened and died away, she found herself being carried with the stream through one of the doors or swept into the procession that sauntered circuitously, with happy inquisitiveness staring into the lower boxes, recognising and accosting friends and criticising costumes. Or, if the dance ended when she was in the middle of the hall, her neighbours dropped down unconcernedly and sat cross-legged on the floor until the music started again. A drone of chattering voices hummed an unceasing, drowsy chant only punctuated by momentary silence as a flash-light blazed and an acrid scent of burnt magnesium lingered for an instant in a scattering cloud of silver dust. From the upper boxes coloured paper streamers were being thrown out and caught, until the box fronts were covered with a flimsy, swaying trellis-work.

"I'm glad you made me come, Yolande," said Deryk, "even if I did have to cut one of my best friends. It's a wonderful sight."

"That's only one thing," she answered. "Are you coming abroad with us? I know you like Felix, because you've told me so four times already this evening—my dear, I don't *mind*, you can go on as long as you like—and, if you won't come, I shall know we aren't friends."

The music stopped, and they stood clapping for an encore.

"Why am I so popular all at once?" asked Deryk.

"You're not, but you're doing no good here, and I can turn you to useful account at Hellenopolis. I don't insist on an answer now, but I want you to think about the idea. Hullo! there's the great Sonia Dainton going out. She's very beautiful, and it's a lovely dress, what there is of it, but I don't like her friends. However, I don't suppose she likes mine."

The encore was refused and they dropped once again into the circling procession round the outer ring of the floor. Yolande was bright-eyed with enjoyment, and Deryk extracted a great deal of simple amusement by assuming a deep voice towards such friends as he met and leaving them to discover his identity. The conical bag was proof against even Mrs. Welman, who remarked with a puzzled expression, "I know your voice, but I can't place it. Do tell me who you are."

Deryk chuckled and walked on. It was nearly midnight, and they were making their way back to the box for supper, when a youthful Apache with cap over one eye, cigarette in mouth and scarlet muffler round his throat cannoned them.

"Mind where you're going, Summertown!" Deryk called.

"Hullo!" He stared at the round, unbetraying eyeholes. "Nothing doing; can't fix you. Who's your friend, Miss Stornaway?"

"Someone you know quite well," she answered. "Are you here alone?"

"No, I blew in with Erckmann's crowd. There's a goodish cold collation in his box, if you're hungry. Everyone welcome; come and bring a friend. I wish you'd tell me who the gentleman in the candle-extinguisher is. You won't? Well, assure me that it isn't my poor, old father, anyway. We've had domestic trouble and we've promised to lead a newish life. Papa would *not* like to think of us here when we might be getting our beauty sleep in our coolish barracks."

With a drag at his forelock he lounged away, exchanged smiles with a pierrette and began to dance. Yolande and Deryk returned to their box and whiled away the time before Raymond's return by listening to the sounds of revelry from Sir Adolf Erckmann's party next door. A steady popping of corks mingled with the deep, guttural pleasantries of the host; the new arrivals were greeted with vociferous welcome, and in the boxes on either side conversation was swamped and drowned.

"Liddle Zonia!" proclaimed the voice of Erckmann.

"Good evening, darlings," came the answer, drawled with casual, detached daintiness. "Evening, Sir Adolf. Lord Summertown told me that your party wouldn't be complete without me, so of course I came. Why aren't you in fancy dress?"

"He's disguised as an English gentleman, Sonia," hiccoughed a thick voice. There were sounds of affronted protest, defining themselves into "Dry up, Pennington, and get on with your supper." "You'll be chucked out, if you can't behave yourself." Then a voice, which Deryk recognised as Mrs. Welman's, raised itself to say, "Put him by me, and I'll keep him in order," which was swallowed in an affectedly tearful whimper from Summertown, "I won't be taken away from the nice kind lady."

Yolande raised her eyebrows and looked at her companion.

"I don't *think* I quite like them," she murmured. "Can you see whether they've nearly finished?"

Deryk had removed his conical headpiece, but he settled it in position again and pushed a chair against the partition.

"About forty of them, just getting their teeth in," he reported on his return. "And there may be others under the table. I'm afraid we've got to put up with it, unless you'd like me to throw a jelly or two over to keep them quiet."

She shook her head resignedly and turned with a smile to her uncle, who had succeeded in mustering his party and was shepherding them into the box. They had already stayed later than they had intended, and, as soon as supper was over, George Oakleigh gave a lead to the faint-hearted by offering a seat in his car to anyone living between Knightsbridge and the river. Raymond snapped his watch with a "God bless my soul! And I've got a big day to-morrow"; and the only reluctant starters were Felix Manisty, who had not been to a ball since he was an undergraduate, and Deryk, who was temperamentally disinclined to go to bed while anyone else was still afoot. At the last moment Felix attempted rebellion and said that he, like Deryk, would stay to finish his cigar, but Yolande overruled him, and in another moment they were massed outside, while Raymond bribed attendants to find his car for him.

Left to himself, Deryk strolled back to the box and settled himself, replete and lethargic, to the enjoyment of a cigar. The tumult next door had subsided, and the party was gradually disintegrating. He heard the same detached, dainty voice saying, "I'm going to have one more with Fatty, and then he's going to take me home." Erckmann announced hospitably, "There's blenty more subber. When you're hongry, you know vhere to gom, hein?"

The door slammed, and he was enjoying the welcome calm, when Mrs. Welman's voice said, "I think you might offer me one."

"It's the only one I've got, but all I have is yours," came the prompt, practised answer. "And a goodish lucifer; be careful with it, because it's the last."

Deryk was wondering whether it would not be charitable to throw Summertown a cigarette over the partition, when he heard a laugh, followed by a faint sound of scuffling. Then the woman's voice said,

"Now you may go. I will find my car myself."

"But what's the matter? You didn't mind really."

Without waiting to analyse his feelings, Deryk put on his headpiece and again mounted the chair by the partition. Immediately under him he saw Lucile Welman seated in an armchair with her hands over her face, while Summertown swung his legs from the arm of the chair and looked on with an uncertain mixture of sheepishness and bravado. The cap over one eye and the scarlet muffler gave him an air of disreputable jauntiness, which was marred by an embarrassed looseness of mouth. Deryk found time to wonder how he himself had looked on the first occasion that he had kissed Lucile. Then he climbed down, re-lit his cigar and began to look for his hat and coat.

"No bones broken," said Summertown cheerfully, trying to draw away her hands.

"Please go, Lord Summertown," she answered in the same frozen voice.

"But I've not done you any harm."

"Oh, you've spoilt everything! I thought you were just a nice, friendly boy; I liked you because you were so young and chivalrous; I thought you were a little bit sorry for me, too——"

She broke off with a shiver. Summertown slid deeper into the chair and put his arm round her waist; Deryk, throwing his coat over one arm, bit deeply into his cigar.

"If you *want* me to go, I'll go," said Summertown. "It seems rather rot, though, when we could have such fun together; we should both regret it, you know."

She tried to remove his arm and rise from the chair.

"Now you are insulting me," she said.

"Bunkum!" he retorted with a laugh. "Did you mind my kissing you, Lucile? If you say you did, I'll apologise and clear out."

He jumped to his feet and stood over her with his hands on his hips. The door of Deryk's box was already open, and he closed it hurriedly.

"Did you mind?" he repeated.

"I won't be bullied!" she answered with a pout.

Summertown laughed with assurance and went back to his place on the arm of the chair, as Deryk again opened the door and headed for the nearest staircase. Everything had happened so quickly that he still did not know what to feel. There was finality at last; his relationship with Lucile Welman, which he had tried to end a dozen times, was over; but he was humiliated that she could end it at her pleasure and not his. Anger and a sense of betrayal filled his mind so that he failed to see that she was doing what he would light-heartedly have done, if a successor of greater novelty or attraction had come his way. Summertown was welcome to what he had got; there was no room for resentment or jealousy there; they would meet—as he had met his own predecessors. . . .

At the corner of the stairs he collided with a girl in Turkish dress, who was walking up alone. Mumbling an apology, he was beginning to dodge aside, when she gave a little startled cry of recognition. For the first time he troubled himself to look beyond the pointed shoes and baggy, divided skirt to the eyes that peered at him over the yashmak. The deep blue, tinged in some light with violet belonged to no woman of his acquaintance but Idina Dawson. She came upon him absorbed and unprepared.

"Yolande told me you weren't coming," he found himself saying after a seemingly endless silence. His voice sounded to him remote and uncontrolled. "Have you been here long? There's such a crowd, I'm going home. Er—what news of your husband? Stornaway told me he was ill——"

The little conventional sentences poured out as if they would have no end. He was so much surprised to find himself able to speak at all that he concentrated all his powers on continuing to talk. Six months before he had pictured himself superbly cutting Idina when they met; later, he had felt that both would be too much embarrassed to speak. He was amazed at his own collectedness. Now he was asking if she had brought her car; could he help to find it? Might he see her home?

"How is Sir Aylmer?" Idina asked. "I didn't really mean to come, but my husband was getting some sleep, and, as I had the tickets, I thought I'd look in to see the dresses. It's a wonderful sight, isn't it? I've no idea how many people there are here. *Your* dress is wonderful, of course; not quite fair, perhaps, because I should never have known you, if you hadn't spoken. I've come without a watch; is it very late?"

She, too, talked breathlessly with a stream of conventional questions and comments, steering eagerly for the unembarrassing and non-committal. For a while they alternated in speech, following parallel lines and automatically starting again when the other stopped, but with no attempt to converse; then Idina ceased, and Deryk was unequal to taking his turn. They stood silent and uneasy, until Idina cast back to his first words.

"Yes, I told Yolande not to expect me," she said hurriedly. "I really didn't think I could get away. . . . You say you're going now?"

"It's frightfully packed and a bit rowdy," Deryk answered quickly. "If you've got your car—oh, then you must let me give you a lift; it's on my way. Yes, on my honour it is. You're in Eaton Square, aren't you? And I've got rooms in Bury Street. If you'll get your cloak, I'll see about a taxi."

2

They were half-way along Knightsbridge before either spoke. Then Idina began suddenly, "Deryk——"

He turned half away and fumbled for his cigarette case.

"Are you sure I don't know what you're going to say?" he asked. "Dina, it was pure chance that we met. Hadn't—hadn't we better leave it at that?"

"But I wanted to tell you I was sorry, I wronged you——"

He put out his hand and touched hers for a moment.

"We can't alter it now," he said. "Dina, we were awful good friends for years and years; and, now that we've met, we can be friends again—at least——" He hesitated, wondering whether he wanted ever to meet her again. "I mean, we were kids together for so long, and, if we meet again——"

The new conditional was not lost on her, but she affected not to notice it.

"You don't want me to speak of—that time? I won't."

"Or think of it," he suggested eagerly. "Wash it away from your mind and start again, as if—as if I'd just come back to England and heard that you were married. I—I should say your husband was a jolly lucky fellow and I should wish you best of luck."

The note of hearty, almost boisterous, good-humour was out of tune with her mood, and she attempted no reply for several minutes. Deryk lay back in his corner, as the taxi bumped along Knightsbridge and slowed down before turning south towards Eaton Square. He felt as if he were just awaking after a day of unbearable excitement and a restless night. Things that had filled his mind a few hours before came back almost audibly after their temporary exile. He remembered Raymond's detached, man-of-the-world advice and his own reception of it, which seemed so dignified at the time and yet had so signally failed to impress Raymond. He remembered wishing that some one would drop a hint to his father, so that he could go down to Ripley Court without too unconditional a surrender . . . He had even begun to construct the scene—and had abandoned it because it presented him in so much less heroic a light than when in imagination he had burst in with a pass-book in his hand, declaiming that his destiny was not to be reined by another man's purse-strings. In the last ten months he had fulfilled a few of his own ambitions and many of his father's forebodings. He could make money, but he could no longer trust himself not to waste it and his own life with it; he could no longer be sure of saving himself from the first woman who troubled to attack him; for all his fastidiousness, he had for some months been flattered and fed by that same Erckmann and his followers whom they had heard roistering that night. Anyone, seemingly, could spin him about and send him in any direction . . . And he did not care enough to resist; and, when it was all over, he did not care about what he had done. He was drifting—and he did not care whether he drifted or not; he was tired, and there was nothing on earth to keep him from drifting. . . .

The memory of Lucile Welman came back suddenly with jagged, wounding edges. He had almost forgotten her in the disarming surprise of meeting Idina and he now strove to loosen and repel her until he had time to think calmly and without giving himself so much pain as any thought of her now caused him. She must be surveyed and measured in all her bearings and significance. . . .

He roused himself to find the taxi entering Eaton Square; another chord in his memory was touched.

"I hope you'll soon have better news of your husband," he said in a correctly sympathetic voice.

Idina looked at him for a moment and then leaned to him with sudden nervous decision.

"Tell the man to go to your rooms first," she said. "I'll drop you and come back here. I want to say something, I want your advice!"

Her excited tone made him look at her in surprise, but he opened the window and gave the new order without comment. As the taxi turned and headed for Buckingham Palace, she laid her hand on his sleeve and faced him with an expression of entreaty.

"What would you do about him?" she asked. "My husband, I mean. At least, I don't know how much Mr. Stornaway told you——"

"He only spoke very generally. You're trying a new man in Naples, aren't you? I should think——"

"I'll tell you how bad he is," she interrupted. "You know he's swollen to twice his normal size? Well, he is—First the wrists and ankles, then the legs and arms, now the whole body . . . like some dreadful caricature. His eyes were just little slits. . . . Then his sight failed three days ago."

"This is awful!" Deryk exclaimed with a shudder. "Is there—is there much hope for him?"

"The doctor says this man in Naples is the only chance. Deryk, have—have I got to go with him?"

It had never occurred to him to doubt that she would and must accompany her husband.

"Yes. You'll take an attendant, of course——"

"He doesn't know what he's saying sometimes," she went on distractedly. "It isn't delirium, but sometimes he seems to go mad and think I'm trying to kill him. He won't take food if I'm in the room, because he says I've poisoned it. He orders me out—in front of the nurses—and says the most dreadful things—that I'm only waiting for him to die so that I can marry again, that I married him for money, that I never cared for him—oh, and the wildest, horridest suspicions! It isn't true, Deryk; I gave him everything I had to give. It may not have been much, but, God knows, it wasn't easy to give."

She ended with a little sob, and Deryk's hand closed restrainingly and with authority upon her wrist. At the same moment the taxi entered Ryder Street, and he hastily told the driver to drive once round the Park and then come back. The man leered, but Deryk's mind was too much occupied to wonder whether they were regarded as romantic revellers insatiably prolonging a six-hour flirtation into the daylight.

"Dina, you've got to pull yourself together," he said sternly. "I'm going to be thoroughly unsympathetic and brutal. You've got to go. He's your husband, and you've got to see him through."

The sudden sternness steadied her, but after a moment's silence she cried,

"Deryk, I can't! I can't! You don't know."

He tried the effect of blandness and reason.

"What's the alternative?" he asked. "Are you going to stay behind?"

"I must get away from him."

"And where are you going to?"

"I don't know. Oh, Deryk, for God's sake, *help* me!"

Her little store of fortitude was spent, and she collapsed limply into her corner, covering her face with her hands and sobbing with the accumulated exhaustion and misery of the past month. The sound acted on Deryk like a lash; his boasted new indifference to her melted as quickly as his remembrance of the suffering she had caused him. All that he saw was someone tormented past bearing and unable to help herself, someone shaken by her own ungovernable emotion and disfigured with weeping. He drew her into his arms, caressing and soothing her like a child.

"Dina! I can't bear it, if you cry," he whispered. "Tell me what you want, tell me what I can do to help you."

"Take me away from him!" she sobbed. "He's killing me!"

Deryk again caught her hand and gripped it until she was grown quieter. For a while he would not risk the effect of speech upon her and sat looking away through the window, as the taxi sped along Piccadilly and turned into the Park. Inept irrelevancies crowded into his head; he was fascinated by the hunched back of the driver, who was like a coachman from some novel of Dickens', in his exuberant grey muffler and faded green overcoat; the early morning was bitterly cold, and he wondered, as he always wondered, how women could go about at night with nothing but a transparent film between their shoulders and the air. . . .

"Where am I to take you to?" he asked at length.

"I don't care. Take me anywhere. I'll do whatever you tell me to."

"My dear, there's nowhere I could take you. I think you *ought* to stay with him, you'd never live it down if it were known that you'd left him. And it *would* be known; these things always are. But, quite apart from that, you're dependent on him as long as he lives. I could find you money for a few weeks, but, as soon as a scandal got on foot, it would be a different thing altogether. Thanks to the governor's reflected glory, I'm too well known to risk offending people from whom I want work." He took her hand and pressed it. "I'd do anything in the world to help you, but it wouldn't do for you to run away. You've got to scrape together all the courage you can find, you've got to see this through, Dina: I'm going to take you home."

This time there was no remonstrance. Her head drooped a little and came to rest with one cheek pressing against his shoulder. Once a shiver ran through her, and he took off his overcoat and wrapped it about her. Sitting in his bizarre dress, he had a momentary feeling that he was playing his inquisitor's part in earnest, sending Idina back to be tormented and in some way, which he was too tired to analyse or define, saving the soul at the expense of the flesh. He wondered how much imagination an inquisitor had, whether they ever sat in judgment on people they loved and whether, as their appreciation of suffering grew finer, they actually won a subtile pleasure from the agony of men and women whom they knew. . . . Idina sat staring in front of her, while the taxi completed the circle and left the Park for Belgrave Square. He wondered how she had managed to get out, with a dying husband in the house, doctors coming and going, nurses hurrying to her with messages. Suppose Sidney sent for her, and she was not there; suppose a servant saw her coming in at six o'clock in fancy costume. . . . And then he tried to compute the desperation and agony of mind which had allowed or compelled her to seek distraction and forgetfulness; he began to picture her return to the bleak house, her timid passage, growing ever more slow, up the stairs, her moment's pause to listen outside the door. . . . The taxi stopped, and he woke to find himself on the kerb, asking if she had her latch-key. Under the eyes of the driver both rallied to an artificially natural carelessness.

"It was very good of you to bring me home," she said, holding out her hand.

"I shall see you again soon, shan't I?" he answered in the same false measure.

"I don't quite know when we're going abroad, but I'll try to let you know. Good-night."

Deryk clambered back into the taxi, picked up his overcoat where it had slipped from Idina's shoulders and drove once more to Bury Street. The fire had long gone out, and the room was airless and cold. He turned from force of habit to his writing-table and picked up a pile of letters, meaning only to glance at the writing and leave the contents until he was less exhausted. The first envelope, however, was addressed in pencil and marked "Most urgent." He opened it and had to look at the signature before he recognised the hurried scrawl as Hatherly's; it stated that the writer had spent the evening, until the last train was ready to start, vainly looking for him.

"Your father is dying: I implore you to come before it is too late."

Deryk read the note twice, swaying slightly from fatigue and reflecting dispassionately, as though criticising his own dream, that it was curious and yet quite natural that the news should have come to him as and when it did. Then he turned to the second letter in the pile and was as much and as little surprised to see his father's writing, in pen-strokes that told their own tale.

"My dear Deryk," he read.

"I have been far from well and I can see that Forsyte takes a grave view. I shall be obliged if you can find time to run down here. "Your affectionate father,

"Aylmer Lancing."

This time Deryk felt himself stirred to artistic admiration. His head was singing too persistently for him to feel; he believed that he could be knocked down and belaboured, like a drunken man, without noticing it, but the isolated brain cell that seemed to exist for irrelevancy and detached criticism noticed and approved the reticence and dignity of the letter. There was no whimpering, no fear, no menace or cajolery. Sir Aylmer was evidently resolved to die in the pose that he had adopted for half his life.

"He'll refuse to have the parson in," Deryk reflected. "And he'll probably make Benson stand him upright at the finish." Then his mind cleared suddenly, and the numbing weariness left him.

"He's dying!" he whispered. "He's been near it so often that I didn't think he could. He knows he's dying, or he wouldn't have written like that. My God! I may not get there in time!"

With the pulses hammering in his temples, he rushed downstairs and seized a time-table from the hall. There was a train from Victoria to Aston Ripley at seven o'clock, slow running and with two changes, but at least the train that would take him to his father in quickest time. Changing out of the fantastic costume which now seemed to mock him, he took a hurried bath and ransacked his wardrobe for thick clothes against the cold which was penetrating and spreading over him. Only when he was huddled in his corner did he remember that he had eaten nothing for hours and was sick with hunger. There was no time to look for food lest the train go without him, and, though the warmth of the carriage made him drowsy, he dared not sleep for fear of being carried beyond the junction or of missing Aston Ripley in the long succession of moribund wayside stations, each in charge of a single somnolent porter and lit by a single gusty lamp.

The uncertain blue-grey dawn had changed to a sunless November morning when at last he was able to get out and stamp his feet on the platform. Two farmers touched their hats to him, as he strode into the main street after failing to find a fly, and, among the dozen faces that he saw in the first mile, half were vaguely familiar. As soon as the feeling had come back to his feet, he broke into a run, head down and elbows to his sides, hardly noticing the houses or passers-by, until he paused with a resentful, sideways glance at the mildewed desolation of the Grange and then plunged on into the park of Ripley Court. Half a mile farther he stopped and deliberately relaxed himself after the hours of cramping fear which he had felt since reading his father's letter. The flag still floated from the staff, not a window that he could see was blinded, and in garden and stables the men were going unconcernedly about their work. A great relief came to him, and he started on again collectedly and in hope towards the chapel. In response to his ring the side door was cautiously opened a few inches by Hatherly, white-faced, heavy-eyed and unshaven.

"I came as soon as I could," Deryk whispered, as he shook hands and passed into a hall still warm with yesterday's fires and so silent that it seemed irreverent to speak above a whisper. "How is he?"

"I don't know," Hatherly answered. "Forsyte reported that no ground had been lost up to last night, but he was asleep when I got back and I haven't seen him. He said you were to be shewn in the moment you arrived. I'm glad you haven't disappointed him, Deryk. You'll find Phillimore stationed outside the room; he wouldn't have anyone with him. Don't disturb him, if he's asleep; he must have sleep. And don't stay more than a moment. I shall be within call, if you want me, and, whatever happens, don't say anything to excite or tire him. He is—I'm not sure that I can make you understand how bad he is."

Deryk tiptoed across the hall and into his father's wing, a little impatient at being lectured in so great particularity. As he approached the door, old Phillimore rose in tremulous welcome and indicated in dumb show that his master was sleeping. Deryk nodded and turned the handle noiselessly. After all his preparation he was startled to find his father sitting up with an open book face downwards in his lap and the reading lamp at the back of the bed alight and shining past him on to the door. Even in shadow ten months had brought about a noticeable change; the furrowed cheeks were appreciably more sunken and the rather mournful eyes more prominent. Sir Aylmer sat with his thin, large-boned hands on the eider-down and his eyes turned to the door, silent, unrevealing, without frown or smile. He might well have sat there for ten months, awaiting Deryk's return; and he seemed capable of sitting for any number of months more.

"I hope you're better, dad; I'm sorry to hear you've been ill again," Deryk began, still keeping his voice almost down to a whisper. "I came the moment I got your letter." He had found no time nor wish to construct the scene beforehand or to rehearse his speeches. "I am sorry to have been away so long," he went on deliberately after a moment's struggle with himself. "I've missed you most awfully."

He walked to the bedside, smiling and holding out his hand. Sir Aylmer continued to look at him without speaking, and Deryk was piqued to find, when both were to blame, that all the contrition and graciousness came from one side.

"I hope you're glad to see me," he went on with a hint of tartness in his voice. A moment later he was sorry for it; he had not realised that his father might be too weak for speech; Hatherly's forgotten lecture returned to his mind. "I mustn't stay any longer, because you're supposed to be asleep, but I had to look in to see how you were. I'll say good-bye for the present, but I shall be here whenever you want me."

His hand went out and closed lightly over his father's; immediately he started back with a sob of dismayed fear on finding the hand cold and stiff. He stared in amazement at the open, unwavering eyes; then he swung the reading-lamp round and deflected the bulb until the light shone directly on to the face. In the earlier half-light the cheek and jaw had seemed almost to be in shadow; Deryk had assumed it to be the blue-grained skin and stubbly growth of a dark man who had not shaved; in the new light the skin of the face, stretching up to the forehead and down to the neck was shewn to be suffused from below with such a blue as Deryk had never seen before. Replacing the lamp, he was starting to summon Phillimore from outside, when he realised that no help was needed. He turned back and, without looking at his father, laid a towel over the ghastly discoloration. Then he tiptoed into the hall, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

Hatherly hurried up with eyebrows raised interrogatively.

"I suppose he's dead," Deryk answered quietly. "I advise you not to uncover the face; oh, don't uncover the face! For God's sake, don't uncover the face!"

Then an internal mechanism over which he had no control began to emit peals of shrill, helpless laughter, which rang harshly through the great, silent house. Hatherly, biting his thumb, looked from Deryk to Sir Aylmer's door and from Sir Aylmer's door back to Deryk. After a moment's hesitation he led the boy away where his laughter would sound less atrocious.

3

Deryk's outburst of hysteria had had its preparation in ten months of over-work, over-excitement, over-taxation of physical reserves and nervous energy and every kind of over-indulgence. It was only occasioned by the shock of his father's death and was not to pass away when the shock had abated. Hatherly, divesting himself of nearly twenty years of his life, found it necessary to put him to bed, and, until the doctor arrived and sent him to sleep, Deryk alternated between a helpless collapse and a feverish desire to be practical. At one moment he was seated on the side of his bed, weeping limply and inconsolably; at another he would raise himself on his pillows and confer nervously on the funeral arrangements.

"You have to get a doctor's certificate, don't you?" he asked vaguely, blinking at Hatherly with flickering eyelids.

"I'll see to all that," was the answer. "Go to sleep now, or you won't be able to help me later."

Deryk lay back for a moment, only to rise again on his elbow with another question.

"Did my father say where he wanted to be buried?" he pursued. "That's usually put into the will, isn't it? Have you got the will? I'm quite all right now; I *want* to talk things over with you."

Hatherly looked at the flushed face and dilated pupils.

"I'll see to all that, Deryk," he repeated. "He wanted to be cremated and to have the ashes buried in the chapel here. The will is actually in the house." He hesitated and then decided to go on as he had started. "Your father altered it two or three months ago. We can talk about that later, but I'll tell you now that he has abolished the trust."

Deryk looked at him without understanding.

"Abolished the trust?" he echoed. "Why?"

Hatherly shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know. I'll say frankly that it was against my advice. It was a great disappointment, of course, that he never saw you, but he followed all that you were doing as best he could. George Oakleigh dropped a hint now and again; and there were others. As you know, he was always afraid that your expectations might land you in trouble with some woman or that you might degenerate into a mere extravagant young waster. He seems to have satisfied himself that you were too level-headed for that."

Deryk stared reflectively at the ceiling for some moments.

"Are *you?*" he asked suddenly.

"I think so. You've got your faults, but I think you're fairly well-balanced and clean-living. But we can talk about all this later. I've sent for Forsyte, and you've got to have a complete rest, while I attend to the immediate—business requirements. I only mentioned the trust, because you can hardly start thinking about that too soon. The whole of your father's money, barring a few legacies, comes to you almost unconditionally."

For two nights and one day Deryk was kept in bed and asleep. At the end of the first night Yolande appeared mysteriously and asked permission to help in the nursing. She found Mrs. Benson white-faced, tearful and uncomprehending, and was warned that her patient occasionally talked strangely in his sleep; indeed, every effort was made to keep her out of the room, as though her own self-respect and her faith in Deryk were being jeopardised together. Certainly after one night in his room she found it hard to pretend that he had said nothing.

"I didn't hear a quarter of what you were saying," she told him steadily. "And that I've forgotten."

"What did I say?" he demanded.

"Deryk darling, I've forgotten. And I swear it won't make any difference to me. You're just the same as you always were."

"In spite of what you heard?"

"Yes," she answered. "But I've really forgotten what I did hear."

Dr. Forsyte consented to put his diagnosis into simple language for Hatherly's benefit. Deryk, he said, was wearing himself out with ordinary unprofitable dissipation; he must be wooed away from the malign influence of London and kept in the country with someone to insist on early hours, suitable companionship and a sane regimen. He was behaving as other young men had behaved before, but he started life in a higher state of nervous excitability than they did and, as they had regretted it, so he would regret it; the lowest price that he would have to pay was likely to be a collapse, and, inasmuch as men living his life seldom remain stationary, he might look forward to delirium tremens as the next forfeit to be paid, or he might contract the habit of taking drugs, or adopt any one of a number of other ingenious devices for destroying an unusually fine constitution by over-stimulation and over-exhaustion.

"He only wants pulling up, my dear Hatherly," the doctor concluded, "but he wants that pretty badly. Very likely this shock will warn him, and I've no doubt that he'll have so much to think about that he may change his mode of life. But he mustn't even work too hard; he must learn to be moderate; don't try to distract his thoughts from undesirable companions by driving him quicker than he can trot; otherwise he'll take his revenge by stimulating himself artificially, and you'll be back again where you are now."

Hatherly nodded, thinking of a time often described to him when Sir Aylmer was tidying the most fruitful years of his life into the Lancing Trust Corporation, working twelve and fourteen hours a day and ultimately coming to subsist on champagne, black coffee, biscuits and cigars. The Trust had been launched at the expense of a stroke and half a generation of helplessness and suffering; now its proceeds were changing hands. . . . If he wanted to run amuck, Deryk would not now lack opportunities: in so far as pleasure and the world were venal, he had them at his feet.

Hatherly returned to the subject of the will immediately after the cremation, but for the time Deryk's mind was absorbed. In the moment of death he first saw his father as the world saw him. As soon as he was allowed out of bed, he went with Yolande into the library and began to deal with the letters and telegrams which had been pouring in since the news of the death was made public. Deryk found circulars from press-cutting agencies, enclosing two-column obituary notices and offering to collect twenty-five, fifty, a hundred or five hundred more references to Sir Aylmer or himself in the British or colonial press; the Governing Body of Melton School, the Senates of seven universities and the governors of thirteen hospitals forwarded copies of their unanimous resolutions of sympathy with the son and gratitude to the father. A Very August Personage sent a telegram of condolence, and from friends and beneficiaries in every quarter of England came a swelling tribute of appreciation.

Sir Aylmer, then, had been at least as well known in England as John D. Rockefeller or J. P. Morgan; his munificence was wider spread and more varied than Carnegie's; for fifteen years he had had no other outlet for his gigantic income than in charity or the endowment of learning; among forty millions of people hardly one was not directly or indirectly, potentially or actually in his debt. And they knew it. Strange men of exalted eminence wrote of his liberality and disinterestedness. "You are, no doubt, aware that I wished to recommend him for a peerage. . . ." "It is a lasting disappointment that his health never permitted him to sit for his portrait; it was always our wish to hang it in the Senate House to commemorate our indebtedness to him. . . ." And many hundreds of letters from strange men of no eminence at all contained a single reminiscence designed to add one stroke to the picture and enrich Deryk's knowledge with one more mite of information. "I was only privileged to meet your father once—in '92 or '93. A banker friend gave me a letter of introduction, and I remember several most interesting conversations in New York. Your father was at that time absorbed in the question of oil—transportation. . . ."

In the first forty-eight hours, when Deryk was still in bed, a furtive succession of reporters had tried to worm their way into the house and obtain exclusive "copy" without too openly outraging a house of death. Phillimore and the servants found themselves at all hours button-holed by discreet, whispering men with professionally grave faces. Cameras were always being set up, advanced and withdrawn, and Hatherly, as he lovingly perfected "all the grand investiture of death," was approached with requests for leave to make a death-mask.

For the most part Deryk was shielded from the distress and grim ironies of the time. For half the day he lay peacefully enough talking to Yolande; the rest of the time they wandered round the house or sat in the library, opening and acknowledging letters. Physical weakness, the shock and break in his life had filled Deryk with a tranquil melancholy; he felt that he had confessed and been given absolution, that the future was his own, to be made worthy of his father, as he now saw him, and of all his own aspirations.

"I shall keep his rooms exactly as they were," he told Yolande. "They were really the only ones he used, and he'd collected all his favourite books and papers there. Come in and look at them."

He went ahead and pulled up the blinds, lighting the room for the first time since his father had died there. Yolande found a simplicity and homely shabbiness in the carpet and furniture from long and continual use. The only pictures were of Deryk and his mother, the square stone house on Riverside Drive, the steam yacht on which they had cruised to the Bahamas and the South Seas. In the book-case she found a number of albums filled with ephemeral records of Deryk's boyhood, school reports, class lists from "The Times," signed menus of twenty-first-birthday dinners, the passenger list of the "Moravia," which had carried him out to India. . . .

"He was very fond of you," she whispered, as she replaced the albums and slipped her arm through his.

Deryk was looking at two costly, gilt-topped volumes, still in their wrappers, "The Ilkley Papers, Selected and Arranged by Deryk Lancing." There was a note inside from the publishers:

"We thank you for your favour of the 7th instant, enclosing cheque for one pound sixteen shillings, for which our receipt is attached. We venture to point out that publication does not take place until the twenty-second of this month, but, as we assume that you are personally interested in the books, we send them, as requested and as an exception to our general practice. We shall, however, be obliged, if you will retain the volumes in your own possession until publication has actually taken place."

Deryk crumpled the note into his pocket and returned the books to their table.

"There was such an awful lot that I wanted to tell him," he whispered. "We were such pals in the old days. I can just remember him in America, before he broke down, and then we seemed to drift apart . . . I got rather frightened of him . . . And this place seemed to make him unnatural." He sighed and walked with her to the door. "Do you remember telling me on the night of our ball that I wasn't born to this sort of thing? You spoke as if you were saying something frightfully insulting, but I'd felt it for years—whenever I bothered to think about it. Enormous shooting parties to people he didn't care about, when he'd never shot in his life and had to be wheeled about his own garden in a chair. A racing stable, when we drove over to Larchpoint solely from a sense of duty and yawned all through the meeting. . . . I could never make out what he was after. If he was on the make socially, like that fellow Erckmann, he could have had peerages and privy councillorships by the dozen, but he refused everything except the baronetcy. It's an extraordinary thing not to understand your own father in the very least."

That afternoon he was to have further food for speculation, when Hatherly came with the will in one hand and a foolscap summary in the other. Stripped of its interminable provisions and qualifications, the will was simple in essence. Legacies were left to servants and friends, a final bequest was made to every hospital or other charitable body on Sir Aylmer's long list, Deryk was invited, if practicable, to continue his father's donations, and the residue of the estate passed, with four exceptions, absolutely and unconditionally to Deryk. Hatherly, in some embarrassment, undertook to explain the exceptions.

"I don't want you to think worse of your father," he began, industriously polishing his glasses. "You'll find, as you grow older, that in essentials men are very similar. Before he married, it appears from what he has told me and from what is set out in the will that there were three or four women to whom he felt himself to be indebted. I believe that they had passed entirely out of his life and that he had never given them a thought until a month or two ago. Then—I don't know,—I suppose he felt uneasy; he didn't like the idea that any of them might be in want, and you will see that he charges the executors to find out whether they are still living and, if so, to make certain allowances to them. I cabled out to New York as soon as I had his instructions and, when I get a reply, I will do whatever is necessary. I daresay you would prefer to leave it to me. The executors are you, Raymond Stornaway and myself."

Deryk nodded his assent with bowed head. It had never occurred to him that his father, too, had sealed chapters in his life, that, before he consecrated himself to his wife and her memory, he had passed through clandestine amours, which came back to disturb his mind twenty-five or thirty years later. What was likely to have happened to the women? They must be old now—nearer sixty than fifty; some had probably died, some sunk into irreclaimable abandonment, others, perhaps, settled down in respectable domesticity. Their husbands would learn from the thousand-tongued American press that Aylmer Lancing was dead, and perhaps their own hearts would miss half a beat through fear, regret or sentimentality. It had never occurred to him, either, that the shifts and slips of youth held the germ of so great permanence. A liaison should belong to careless, uncalculating springtime. He wondered whether, forty years later, he and Lucile Welman would meet and be elaborately introduced by other old men and women and make neutral conversation and separate to their own homes and their own thoughts. He wondered, too, whether his sons would make their discoveries when they came to examine his will. . . .

"I wonder my father didn't do something for them at the time," he murmured.

"I happen to know he did," Hatherly answered. "But it's an uncertain world with plenty of ups and downs in it, and, for all he knew, they might have had more downs than ups."

As Hatherly, but not Deryk, was to find out within a week, Sir Aylmer also desired to protect his heir and the estate from unfounded claims. Two days after the funeral a trim, obstinate-mouthed woman of fifty, in black bonnet and dress, called with a wealth of papers and represented herself as the widow of the deceased, from whom she had been living apart for thirty years by arrangement in writing. She demanded to see Deryk, but departed precipitately when Hatherly explained himself to be the solicitor to the estate and asked Benson to telephone for the police.

"It's an uncertain world," Hatherly repeated. "One of the first things you'll have to do is to make a will of your own. You're in the position of having no heir-at-law. If you got knocked down by a car and killed, your estate would go to the Crown. You'll have to think carefully over what you want done."

Deryk's eyes travelled slowly round the office until they came to rest on the high mahogany double doors which communicated with his father's study.

"I suppose it's always open to a man to refuse what you leave him," he said. "Otherwise I think I should look out for my worst enemy and make him my heir. It didn't bring much happiness to the guv'nor, Hats, all this place and the money and everything."

"He hadn't the health to enjoy it," Hatherly answered conventionally.

"But, now that I've got it, what can I do with it? The average man can't eat more than one dinner a night or drink more than one bottle of even the most expensive champagne with it. You can collect Corots, I suppose, but, if they're for sale, you can buy 'em all in a week or two. I've *got* everything I want—clothes, books, pictures; and I honestly believe I've done everything I want to do. You can rule out sport, which I can't stand in any form; I like travelling about and seeing places, but you and I have seen pretty well every place we ever wanted to see." Hands in pockets and frowning, he stared at Hatherly in perplexity. "What would *you* do with it? I shall keep on the guv'nor's charities and all that, and they're likely to increase every year, but so's my income, and they're only a flea-bite."

Hatherly locked the will in his safe and took up a position in front of the fire.

"You've got youth and health on your side," he began. "They say that money carries great power, but I've known many men who've had money and very few who could extract power from it." He turned and helped himself to a cigar from the mantelpiece. "This reminds me very much of your father's way of speaking five and twenty years ago; he said quite deliberately that ten men knew how to make money for one who knew how to spend it. Raymond Stornaway always said that he was the one, that it was a natural gift with him, his one manifestation of genius—and that he never had the opportunity. Since that time he's made money of his own and spent it; and he's spent millions of other people's money. Perhaps he was right; *I* certainly should have no idea what to do with it. I've not got imagination enough to see beyond free hospitals, public libraries, scholarships—the ordinary things."

"Has Stornaway?" Deryk asked. "That's all *he* does."

"He had much more romantic ideas when he was your age," Hatherly answered. "There were wonderful schemes for amelioration of working-class conditions, improvement in health and education. He was sincerely convinced that a group of rich men could dictate the internal policy of every country, the diplomatic relations between countries; that they could create their own parties and press and supporters; he was prepared to take small children and educate them in his own doctrines until they were grown men and the world was being gradually covered by 'Schoolmen' sent out by Stornaway. The autocracy of wealth, in other words." Hatherly paused to laugh softly at his memory of Raymond in the days of his most turbulent disputatiousness. "Seriously, Deryk, why don't you talk to him? He had a great influence over your father."

"I'm not sure that I shan't leave the whole estate to him," Deryk answered with a smile. "You could get the thing on to a single sheet of paper, couldn't you?"

"But what if Raymond predeceased you? He's a generation older."

"Oh, I was only thinking of a temporary precaution, in case I got run over, as you suggest," Deryk answered.

4

On the day after the funeral, Yolande went as usual into Deryk's room to bring him his breakfast. She found him lying back on his pillows, silent and thoughtful, with the day's letters and paper unread on the table by his side; in his hand was a bulky pile of manuscript with a heavily sealed envelope on top. When she had put the tray on his bed, he stared at it for some moments and then abruptly thrust the papers towards her, telling her to read them.

"It's from my father," he explained, as she tried to recognise the writing. "I want to know what you think about it."

The envelope bore the words—"For Deryk Lancing. Only to be opened after my death." The letter was dated many months before, but the alternation of ink and pencil, vigour and weakness in thought and expression suggested that Sir Aylmer had spread his composition over a long period. At one time his mind had worked so well that the pen had raced; he saw clearly, he knew what he wanted and how alone it could be said; at another his brain and fingers fumbled. There was a blend of posturing and sincerity, as he recalled that he had an attitude to maintain or realised that his last pose would have collapsed before Deryk came to read the letter; and the language was at one moment pretentious as a leading article, at another familiar, colloquial and unpolished.

"My dear Deryk," it began.

"A week ago Forsyte made up his mind that I was dying, and at my request Hatherly went to London to tell you this and to represent to you that it was your duty to come immediately. I have not enquired the terms of your reply to him, but you did not come. I wish you to understand that nothing in this letter is intended as a reproach; and I only mention the facts because they convinced me that no ordinary difference of opinion could be keeping us apart at such a time. After consideration I have decided that no harm can be done by my writing frankly on several subjects which we have hitherto not discussed; I do not ask or expect you to share my views or even to be affected by them, and therefore the opportunity of even considering them will be withheld until the time for discussion is past. If I had anything to retract or undo, if I felt that I had been wrong in my upbringing of you, I should hasten to admit it and to make such amends as lay in my power. It is because I deliberately abide by what I have done, however unhappy the consequences, that I think you should at least know the motives of my actions; you can only guess at them now, and I can only remind myself that you came home after two years abroad, stayed in this house for less than a week and went away again; these are the *facts,* and apart from them I, too, can only guess. It has been suggested to me that you are staying away until I make a settlement upon you; if so, you have never given this as a reason; it has been suggested, again, that you were influenced by your feelings towards Miss Penrose; if so, I can only remind you that they were never given as a reason.

"Hatherly has told you that, before you were born, a trust was erected to safeguard you from some at least of the perils to which the possession of very great wealth would expose you. Though I believe you unlikely to get into trouble by reason of your own folly or natural depravity, you are still so young and inexperienced that, until you have shewn yourself equal to the burden, I see no reason to relax the considered precautions which I have taken. I speak regretfully but without cynicism when I say that there is little or nothing that most women would not do in order to be your wife; I say that men and women alike will treat you differently throughout life according as they do or do not know who you are; it is not always intended, but they cannot help it; women will sincerely believe themselves to be in love with you and would as sincerely discover their mistake on the day they found you penniless; you have ever to be on your guard against an extra surface cordiality.

"I should be foolish to assay how much any one woman would be influenced, I do not know whether you ever asked Miss Penrose to marry you, but I have decided to say this before dismissing her from the discussion. Though she would never have given you the stimulus which you require, though her world was a different world, a smaller world, though women—the so-called 'adaptable sex'—never rise to their husbands' rank in a socially unequal marriage, she was personally unexceptional, and, though I could never regard her as your intellectual equal or even associate, I should not have opposed your union when once I was satisfied that it was not mere youthful infatuation. But I should have permitted no engagement until you had convinced yourselves and me that you were indispensable to each other. You may think that that is for you to decide, but I am looking beyond a single lifetime.

"I made a gigantic fortune unexpectedly in a strange country. I had then to abandon a country where a millionaire is absorbed and return to one where there is no millionaire-class *per se,* where, too, I had the social and professional status of an unsuccessful barrister, where I had shot ahead of any friends I may ever have had. There was no question of my starting again; my life was over. But I had to determine what social niche you were to occupy, what was to be your career and what use was to be made of my fortune. The third question is unanswered, the second you will have to answer for yourself—perhaps you are answering it now; the first was answered for me by your school and university—to my disappointment and misgiving at the time, for they had failed to make anything of me, and I returned from America with a republican intolerance of the English governing class, which to me was parasitic and meant exclusiveness, incompetence and unworthiness of aim. To you, I think, that is all that it means now, but you will have to outgrow and you will outgrow that intolerant superiority, as I did. I was analytical and contemptuous as you are of men like Pebbleridge, who hunt four days a week, enjoy hereditary dignities, power and local influence—and are nothing as men or rulers. It was one of my nightmares that you would grow up like one of his sons.

"I think that the South African War changed that feeling. My despised governing class, not surrendering to war-fever, not thinking of war as a glorified polo, not looking for decorations or promotion, went out and, as to many of them, never came back. Pebbleridge lost two sons, and the third ran away from school and was shot through the lungs a month after landing. So there is now no heir to the title. But Pebbleridge doesn't complain: they had to go: South Africa, the whole empire, is only Bishop's Cross on a large scale; it's their estate which they have to run—and they can't tolerate other classes claiming to run it for them or share in the control. Other classes no doubt made the same sacrifices, but I had not singled out any other class for facile condemnation. As in war, so in peace. I don't know whether you were ever at home when Oakleigh's friend Loring came down. He is young, able, rather indolent, with a liking for pleasure; but he was indefatigable in the House of Lords. However much it irked him, his career was the public service, and the public service was his career. He disliked it, I daresay, as much as the Duke of Devonshire disliked it: he did not care for any phantom sense of power which it might bring him: it was his job. And, if the sense of power *had* amused him, that is only to say that an unmixed motive is the symptom and characteristic of fanaticism.

"Now *that*, Deryk, is a spirit and a class which are lacking in America. You need a territorial aristocracy to breed it; you need continuity, tradition and the trustee sense which you find in an Oxford College or an Inn of Court—the sense that you hold for those who come after you what was held for you by those who went before. I have never spent a night away from this house since I came here, so that, though the Stornaways and my neighbours may regard me as an upstart, I feel that I have lived here until the spirit of the place has entered into my soul. I would rather starve than sell this place as Stornaway sold it to me. It is the symbol of tradition, of inherited service, of public life. I hand it on to you for you to enjoy and hand on to your son; so long as it remains that symbol, you will not betray the tradition. It is only the territorial aristocracy that has a family history; other classes migrate, marry, scatter, die—unrecorded and without leaving a trace behind. Who cares about them whether they lead honourable lives or not? They are unknown. But, if *you* were cited as a co-respondent, all England would discuss it: there is a graver responsibility attaching to you, and you will hesitate until you have decided that your position forbids you to trip. You have seen or read of scandals in this class, but how few they are! In politics two men of my time were involved in what would pass as venial in any other country; both men were broken.

"I have told you that I came to admire the aristocracy of this country for the very reason which formerly aroused my contempt. It is hereditary. Now, I inherited nothing—that is to say, nothing but arms and legs, colouring, physical characteristics. The rest of me was made by myself, and I hand it on to you and your children's children. You start life as one of the richest men in the world and with every day that goes by you will discover more of the power of riches, you will speculate more on their potentiality. I do not profess to have made much headway, for my life came to an end as I tried my first experiment. In addition to money you inherit brains—as you shewed at school, and at the university—determination, endurance—as you are shewing now—and, I hope, judgment. I have brought you up in the society, the surroundings and the atmosphere of the class which I have been discussing. You are scornfully aware of its defects, and the narrowness of its life is irksome to you—(Confess that you allow yourself to be too easily bored. And agree with me that the life led by anyone else always *is* narrow; a Prime Minister goes from Cabinet to House and from House back to Cabinet: what a life! Resist the excess of analysis and logic: the world does not act from pure reason, nor are you purely reasonable yourself, and you do not wish to be barrenly 'superior,' Deryk). I have provided the home and the material means for a family which, so far as human prophecy can say, will never have to work for a livelihood; you and your children can devote yourselves to public life as naturally, as inevitably as a Cecil or Cavendish.

"And, Deryk, though you are academically inclined at present, though I have always wanted you to do what you could best do, I believe and hope that you will be drawn into government. First of all, you will discover, as I did, the fascination of controlling people—(I, the unsuccessful barrister, could hold people up so that they could not move from one state to another; I determined to some extent where they were to live, and how); then, when they are at your mercy, you will want to reform them, to make them happier—(All this reminds me so strongly of Raymond Stornaway when he was your age). In the next place you will be driven into the open to protect your own property and preserve your own influence. Of course, when once you are *in* the open, you will not be allowed to go back. There are so few like you, Deryk, and you are so badly wanted; men who have been brought up like the Cecils in an atmosphere of politics and with a tradition of politics behind them, men who look upon themselves as the trustees and guardians of their countrymen, men, above all, who can afford to wait. In public life there is no greater danger than a poor man; there is also no stronger man than the man who can wait and, if need be, resign power, even withdraw from public life until the tumult and the shouting die. Consider Hartington refusing to be stampeded by Gladstone over Home Rule or by Chamberlain over a tariff; in either case he thought the policy wrong and bad, he said so, he left the government that was flirting with such dangerous stuff. I believe Chamberlain thought that Home Rule would not pay and that a tariff would—pay as electoral issues, I mean; originally he was not opposed in principle to the first, he was to the second; he had gone into politics late in life, he could not afford to wait.

"When you have tasted domestic power, you will not be content to stop short. It will not be enough to control the people in one country by holding up supplies; that will be swamped and obliterated when the people of that country are thrown into conflict with other peoples. (You have probably been discussing this with George Oakleigh; if not, you must.) The whole world is at the mercy of a few governments working secretly and committing millions of people to something from which they cannot withdraw and which they cannot control. You, as a pawn in the game, must not submit to that (I am speaking democratically for the moment); speaking as myself or in your place, we are too considerable to be ignored or upset by a rival political power. As I see it, the conflict of the future—as in a sense it has been the conflict in the past—will be between organised wealth and the old governing machine; and I forecast that the units of wealth will draw closer and closer together as their interests become identified and as they try to eliminate competition and waste. The present process of amalgamation will increase geometrically; America is, of course, far ahead of this country, but you may live to see all banking in England unified in a single corporation and all railways similarly unified, as already the competing lines are beginning to pool their traffic. You can see the shipping lines, east and west, combining; I have no doubt that the mines will follow. This will go on, the units of wealth will become interlaced (*I* started with a strip of burnt prairie and within five years I was carrying my own grain on my own system; I could not help it), the mines, the ships, the railways will be in the same hands, and the number of hands will ever diminish. Then—these prophecies are rash, but I am convinced that this must be the natural development of wealth—either the government of the world will be administered by a committee of rich men who feed, clothe and carry the people of the world, or else the old government machine will assume control of this financial power, on the ground that it is too great to be *outside* the government. Perhaps it will come to the same thing. The possession of wealth and the control of government cannot be separated.

"I am not rash enough to prophesy how soon this fusion will be effected; nor can I say what you and your generation will be able to do. I have done nothing myself beyond thinking and speculating. You, I fancy, have not yet even begun to think. That is why I have written this letter. After full consideration I can offer no advice, but I do not feel that the letter will have been wasted, if I make you appreciate the power which I have put in your hands and the position in which I have placed you and your children. The potentialities are more tangible than if you were Prince of Wales now or if you were to become Prime Minister in thirty years' time. This is not grandiloquence or megalomania; I know what I have done, I can guess what more I might have done, if I had enjoyed full powers during the last fifteen years instead of sitting helplessly watching you and wondering what you would become.

"But, Deryk, it is not my first wish that you should devote yourself to the pursuit of power: I am merely indicating your opportunities. My first wish for my own and only son is that he should be happy. You wanted to stay in England two years ago and study the later history of Greece. I would sooner have you do that, I would sooner have you follow any other worthy aim than feel at the end of your life that you were wasted. This dying is an interesting business. With me it has gone on for fifteen years; save at the very beginning, when I would gladly have ended my life, I have not wanted to die, I have pulled myself back again and again when Forsyte has given me up; I do not want to die now, but I am prepared, as I have always been. I want to stay here as long as I can, I want to watch you. It is so commonplace and yet so incredible that, if I die to-night, the world which seems a part of me will go on to-morrow as before. I cannot appreciate my consciousness suddenly ceasing to register. And, when I say good-bye to you, as I do now, I cannot feel that it is the last good-bye. Years ago, when I first went to America, I said good-bye to Hatherly; I never meant to come back, I *knew* that I should never see him again, and yet the words were only words. So now, while we are both alive, I cannot *feel* the finality which the words convey to my *head*.

"My blessing goes with you always, Deryk. I repeat that I see no need to modify or apologise for anything I have done: I should behave in the same way if the same situation presented itself to me to-morrow. I leave untouched the trust that I deliberately erected for your protection, feeling, as I do, that, though you are shaping well, though I am getting confidence in you, you are still too young and your position is still so exposed that the protection cannot wisely be withdrawn.

"Good-bye, my son.

"Your loving father,
"AYLMER LANCING."

Yolande put the letter back in its wax-bespattered envelope and looked up to find Deryk's eyes upon her.

"Oh, my dear, I want weeks to think about this!" she exclaimed.

Deryk looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"He must have wanted me pretty badly at the end," he murmured, "when he *did* upset the trust." Then his hands went up and covered his face. "My God! Yolande, there was so much I wanted to tell him!"

5

As soon as Deryk was well enough to get up and go to bed at normal hours, Yolande announced that she must return to London and complete the arrangements for her marriage. The date on which she had fixed in her own mind had been postponed, but Deryk did not guess this, and she said no more than that the wedding would take place very quietly in the new year. They were then going to live for a few weeks in Chelsea, while Felix completed and delivered his first course of lectures; as soon as the spring had made Hellenopolis tolerable for a woman who had never experienced the rigours of its wind-swept winter, she was to accompany him there and stay till the end of the summer.

On her last evening at Ripley Court Deryk left Hatherly to smoke and slumber in the dining-room while he carried her away to the library and hesitatingly thanked her for coming to look after him.

"But you know I was always very fond of you!" she laughed.

"Yes, but it's rather different when you're just going to be married. In Felix's place I should have objected rather violently."

"He's never violent, but he *did* object," Yolande confessed. "However, I told him I'd known you much longer than him. Deryk, I know it's a tiresome question, but what are you going to do with yourself now?"

There was no answer for some moments. Deryk sat looking into the fire and thinking how wonderfully empty the house would seem without Yolande. He would have to spend some months working daily to learn from Hatherly the outline of his own business affairs; and, when he was qualified to deal with them, he would have to be at hand for a few hours each day to see that the machine ran smoothly. This, indeed, he would have to do all his life, even if he never set himself to solve the larger problem which had baffled his father. Hatherly would come to do less and less; ultimately he would do nothing at all; he was growing elderly and had only surrendered himself out of friendship to Sir Aylmer; in three or six months he might well ask to be relieved of his duties. Then the great house with its enveloping silence, which was outraged by a burning coal falling from the grate, would be Deryk's alone. Phillimore, growing drowsier each day, would keep his books and file his letters; Benson with his professional cheerfulness and his wife with her comfortable maternal attitude and diction would stay on for a time until he had settled down, but they, too, wanted to retire; the younger servants would leave, half a dozen at a time, as they had come. And another half dozen, equally unknown to him, would take their place. He could always fill the house, of course; his friends were without number, they liked him, they enjoyed coming, a week-end at Ripley Court was a coveted privilege. Or so they said; his father's letter had warned him to discount even the most disinterested smile of friendliness. . . .

"You talked about my coming out with you and Felix," he said at length.

"Would you be able to get away?" Yolande asked. "I suggested it when your father was alive, of course. Would it really interest you, Deryk? Felix says it's frightfully rough and you have to be full of enthusiasm to put up with it."

Deryk rose and fetched her a copy of the essay with which he had won the Cresswell Prize four years earlier—"Trade Routes of the Mediterranean Littoral from Alexander to Constantine."

"If that's not enthusiasm, what is?" he demanded with a laugh. Then he went back to his chair by the fire, gazing into it and shielding his face with one hand. "As you know, I wanted to devote my whole life to this kind of thing. You see, I always think that Athens between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars reached a relatively higher standard of civilisation than has ever been known before or since. It bloomed more tropically, I mean. Well, I always wanted to know more than the books told me. I wanted to know——"

He talked, more to himself than to her, for half an hour, pulling himself up at last with a self-conscious apology.

"I don't mind how long you go on in that line," she reassured him. "Well, are you going on where you left off when you came down from Oxford?"

Deryk shivered and came out of his dreams.

"I don't know. I'm so infernally restless. I like *talking* about it, but I don't at all know that I'm keen to settle down in harness again."

Yolande shook her head gravely.

"If you *don't,* Deryk——"

"I know. I'm honestly going to try; I think it's what the guv'nor would have liked, but I get so tired of things!" He laughed, and there was little but impatience in the laugh. "I'm not sure that I'm not really coming with you because I'm afraid of being left alone here with nothing to do."

"But you've got more to do than you'll ever get into one life. Surely you see that? Even without your father's letter."

"But how am I to start?" he demanded almost querulously.

"Go and talk to uncle Raymond."

"I'm going to, you may be quite sure. Yolande, what did you think of that letter?"

She looked long into the glowing fire before answering, and, when she spoke, it could be seen that she was sorting her ideas.

"I disagreed with most of it," she began, "because he was trying to force biology into a channel of his own, and you can't do it. But I agree that you're morally committed to a life of public service. Not for his reasons, though." She hesitated again. "You both of you seem to miss one very important thing, and that is that you're in debt to the rest of the world and that you've got to pay your debt. Sir Aylmer began to make money by being clever enough to get hold of something that other people thought valueless. Well, he has been paid for his cleverness, but you're not entitled to go on making other people pay you. You didn't *invent* anything or make anything; you just bought cheaply something that other people wanted so badly that you could make them pay you any price you liked. And, following on that, you, who had got the money, made corners in dozens of things that other people had to have. Well, you're entitled to be paid for your enterprise and your organisation, but you've been paid for that already, and the rest ought to go back for the good of your fellows. I'm not singling you out, of course; the people who own land where a city wants to spread itself are in exactly the same position. So, you see, that's where I go farther than Sir Aylmer or you; you've no right to the money, you've *got* to get rid of it."

Deryk nodded slowly.

"Well, if I accept all that," he said. "I don't want it, I shouldn't know what to do with it, if I kept it. The question is, *how* am I to get rid of it?"

"Talk to uncle Raymond," she counselled him again.

A few days later Deryk did in fact invite Raymond Stornaway to dine with him alone and talk business. He explained lengthily, without interruption, encouragement or dissent; the result was to be profoundly unsatisfactory.

"Tell me exactly what you want to do," Raymond said at the end, "and I'll tell you if I can help you to do it."

Deryk placed his elbows on the table and recapitulated his explanation.

"Well, sir, I've got an income that I couldn't spend if I wanted to. You always hear of other people not being able to do things because they haven't the money; here's the money. How am I to use it?"

Raymond smiled and shook his head.

"What do you want to *do?*" he asked again. "Do you mean to provide free opera houses for the poorer classes? That's an unexceptionable ambition, but perhaps you agree with me that very few things are worth having—or appreciated, when you've got them—unless you have to make some sort of struggle to get them. Or you can provide free meals for the poor, which I don't recommend. What do you *want?*"

"I don't know," Deryk answered.

"Then you're going to have such an education as comes to few men," Raymond answered cheerfully. "I know what *I* want, but I've thought it out painfully over a course of years, and I'm not going to tell you. You've got to think it out for yourself. It won't make a great deal of difference to mankind or even the Lancing Trust Corporation if you spend ten or twenty years experimenting and learning. And then you'll be in a position to pay for your fancies. I'll discuss projects with you any time, but I'm not going to save you the trouble of taking a great opportunity."

Deryk sipped his wine thoughtfully and looked across at the kindly, bantering face opposite him.

"George Oakleigh introduced me the other night to a friend of his called David O'Rane," he said. "*His* great ambition seems to be to rescue prostitutes and get the Congo away from the Belgians. I suppose I'm hardly rich enough for that."

"I don't know any man who is," Raymond answered. "You don't abolish cruelty to women, children, animals or native races by *that* means. And I take it that your friend wants to abolish inhumanity rather than to rescue a few hundred thousand people who are suffering from its effects. Strike deeper, my boy."

Deryk shrugged his shoulders uncertainly.

"You can educate them, I suppose," he said.

"They've been brought up on the milk of Christianity for two thousand years. Europe—Germany—was a Christian country throughout all the dark infamies of the Palatinate War; it needn't humanise men much. I don't want to hurt your feelings in any way, I don't know anything about your religious susceptibilities——"

"Oh, I don't believe in anything," Deryk interrupted lightly. "But would you say that Christianity has never affected the ordinary lives of men? The early martyrs, the ascetics, the Crusaders, if you like——"

Raymond's eyes gleamed hopefully, as he shook his head.

"It was an influential belief then," he said. "Just as

Mohammedanism is now. And for the same reason—because it was run on a paying basis. The paid, professing clergy would never agree, but I claim that Christianity ceased to be effective when a man ceased to think that his sins would be visited on his head in a material hell; when he ceased to fear, in other words. Fear's far more potent than love. The decline started early, because the Church based itself on its power as a mediator and interpreter; what killed Christianity was the Church; you cannot keep men in the belief that they will expiate their sins in pools of liquid fire, if anyone—the Redeemer himself, let alone his vicars—have power of absolution and dispensation. The Church made hell a put-up job, and the martyrs wilted. But, if you could make it a real thing once more, if you could persuade people of hell as convincingly as a Mohammedan can be made to believe that he passes straight to Paradise, if he dies on behalf of the True Faith——!"

Raymond left the sentence unfinished and threw his hands into the air. Deryk would only shake his head and push back his chair.

"Shall we go upstairs?" he suggested. "You won't get people to believe that nowadays, sir. And it would be the greatest possible set-back to human progress, if you could."

"I have seen enough of human progress to notice some of its shortcomings," Raymond commented drily. "Leave that out, though. Why would it be a set-back?"

Deryk swept his arm round in a half-circle.

"Doctrines apart, you would be enslaving the mind of the world to a new pope," he declared.

Raymond laid one hand earnestly on the boy's shoulder.

"But *I* should be the new pope," he explained.

There was a laugh of grudging concession.

"I thought you meant it seriously," said Deryk.

"I do. I tell you, as I told your father years before you were born, that I wanted to make mankind believe as I believe. I could do it, too; I could start doing it to-morrow, if I had the money. It would take some years, perhaps some generations, but against modern skepticism I would set modern methods of publicity. I tell you in all seriousness that I would undertake to convert the whole world to my doctrines—they're essentially reasonable doctrines—within a century, if I had the money."

They had reached the smoking-room, and Deryk looked about for two empty chairs.

"What are the doctrines?" he asked.

"I am not going to help you any more at present," Raymond answered. "What would *you* do, if you wanted to humanise the world?"

Once more Deryk shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I don't know," he said. "I asked the question because I shan't be here to see it carried out. When I go out to Asia Minor with Felix and Yolande, I propose to provide against accidents by making a will and leaving everything to you to do exactly what you like with. If I outlive you, of course you won't get the money—or, if I marry, for that matter; and, if you outlive me, equally I shan't see you getting to work." He stopped to laugh at Raymond's expression of surprise. "I'm quite serious, sir. I haven't yet even begun to know what to do with the money, I've never met anyone who did or could even offer a new suggestion. But everyone tells me that you'd have no difficulty; you tell me so yourself, and I accept your word. I think it's only fair, though, that, if I pool the money, you should pool the ideas."

Raymond looked closely at him.

"Could you carry them out?" he asked.

"I don't know what they are."

"Would you try?"

Deryk laughed and refused to commit himself.

"I attach no conditions to the money," he pointed out. "You ought to be equally generous with the scheme. Then I could go away with an easy conscience and stay abroad as long as I liked. On my honour I've told Hatherly to get to work on the will."

"If it's true, you're an idle young scamp," said Raymond. "If it's not true, you're a disrespectful young scamp. Order me some coffee, or I'll never come and dine with you again."

That night he wrote to his niece. "I like your young friend; he improves on acquaintance, but he's extraordinarily helpless and alone. Bones a bit soft, too; and I shouldn't be surprised to learn that he'd grown too fast or that all his strength had gone to his brain. He's neurotic, but I don't suppose his dear ruffian of a father could be expected to have a normal, healthy son. He's astonishingly young, of course. . . ."

At the beginning of the new year Yolande and Felix were prosaically married in London; Deryk lent them Ripley Court for their honeymoon and came up to town on business until its end. One item, as he had warned Raymond, was the new will, and it was signed at the end of January. A month later, all three of them left England for Trieste and an Austrian Lloyd island steamer for Hellenopolis.

CHAPTER VI

SI JEUNESSE POUVAIT . . .

"The disappointment of manhood succeeds to the delusion of youth: let us hope that the heritage of old age is not despair."

DISRAELI: Vivian Grey.

I

STANDING on deck and watching the English coastline contract, fade and finally merge in an indeterminate haze between sea and sky, Deryk calculated that almost exactly a year had passed since he and Hatherly stood, braced against the wind, watching an indeterminate haze between sea and sky looming, defining and growing until it finally leapt into focus as the English coastline. The time seemed longer, more than a year's activity had been crowded into the twelve months; assuredly he was more than a year older. As the very haze melted from view, he turned to watch for the French coast, wondering how long he was to be away and what would await him on his return. He was glad to be escaping into comparative solitude, where he would be able to think, able to rest his dancing nerves, able to win back the habit of work and the old critical joy in making the work fine.

When he joined Yolande and Felix at Charing Cross, he had been sufficiently nervous and excited to make both wonder whether a second collapse was preparing. He would only say that he had been kept rather too busy "clearing up odds and ends," but, while the train waited in the station and the scattered groups by the doors coalesced into a long, unbroken line, his eyes were restlessly searching the crowd, as though he expected each newcomer to be looking for him. As the train began to move away, he wrapped a rug round his knees and settled peacefully enough to his papers; at Dover a telegraph boy was standing by the gangway, repeating "Sir Deryk Lancing" to every male passenger. Yolande saw him take the envelope with an air of reluctant obligation; she also saw him crumpling it unopened into a tight ball and tossing it over the side of the steamer. Their eyes met, and Deryk blushed.

"I believe it's going to be a rough crossing," she said with hastily assumed apprehension.

Deryk wondered, as he had never ceased wondering since his breakdown, how much Yolande knew or suspected, above all whether he had let any names pass his lips in the endless nights, when he never knew if he was awake or dreaming.

He had hardly returned to his rooms in London, after leaving Ripley Court to Felix and his wife, before Lucile Welman called upon him. Professionally sensitive to psychological atmosphere, she had whispered a phrase of sympathy on his loss and quickly withdrawn. Two days later she invited him to dine with her "quite quietly"; three days after that she called again. Deryk was reduced to instructing his landlord to say that he was out, when next she called; he cut short telephone conversations with prompt resolution, when she begged him to come and advise her, as she was in trouble; when she wrote, he began by leaving the letters unanswered and left them later unread. The honeymoon was over, he was making his last arrangements and buying his last clothes, when they met unexpectedly in Bond Street. Her foot was on the step of her car, and she almost dragged him inside and told her chauffeur to drive through the Park and home.

"I should never have thought you naturally cruel," she began invitingly. "Of course, I know now that you never, never cared for me, but there are ways of breaking it. When one writes and gets no answer——"

"Did you invite me to drive with you for the sake of telling me this?" Deryk interrupted wearily.

"You don't seem to know it yourself." She covered her cheeks with her hands, looking at him tragically over her finger-tips. "My God, I wonder if you can possibly, possibly conceive what I've been through! Why did you do it, Deryk?"

"Why did I do what?"

"Why did you kick me away like a mongrel cur? I know you had to go away, I called to say how sorry I was. But when you were back, when I begged you to see me——"

Deryk leaned across her and pulled up the window.

"As I don't feel that your chauffeur can help," he said, "I see no reason for making him a party to the discussion. There were several reasons; the one I propose to give you is that I'm leaving England in a week or two and consequently I've been very busy. If it's any consolation, I've seen no one."

She turned on him with primitive possessiveness.

"Where are you going to?" she demanded.

"Asia Minor. I shall be away some months."

"And you never told me?"

Her attitude of injury and outraged dignity seemed to Deryk forced and theatrical. He only wanted to escape from the car; she had mounted on to a plane of emotion where he could not follow her, even if he wanted to.

"It was in the papers, I believe," he told her shortly.

"I don't expect to have to look in the papers to see when you're tired of me."

Deryk affected a drawl of indifference to hide his rising impatience.

"Surely our intimacy ended some time ago," he suggested.

She turned away to conceal her face from him.

"You can say that—to me!" she cried.

"If I said anything else, you might like it less," he warned her.

"I couldn't."

"I might tell you the whole truth, Lucile," he answered. "As it is, I see no point in recriminations. Don't reproach me, and I won't reproach you. I think I shall get out here. Let's say good-bye with a good grace."

His hand was stretching out to the indicator, but she gripped his wrist and brought him back.

"I won't let you go," she whispered fiercely. "You're everything, everything in the world to me, I can't get on without you." The savage yearning died out of her voice, and she caught his hand and pressed it to her lips. "Oh, Deryk, you do still love me! Say you love me!"

An almost imperceptible lisp had come into her speech, and she was eliding the y of "you." The artifice, and the fact that he recognised it to be an artifice, swept away all his affectation of indifference and left him starkly hating her until he only wanted the glowing satisfaction of hurting her. He opened his mouth to remind her of their proximity at the Albert Hall, but a new moderation restrained and told him that he would afterwards regret any outward harshness.

"There will never be any lack of men to tell you that," he answered.

"I gave you everything, and now you throw it back in my face. I risked everything——"

"We shall do no good by going over all this again. I *will* get out, Lucile."

There was a moment's struggle, but this time he reached the indicator and turned it until the car slowed down and stopped. When it was too late he discovered that he was getting out almost half a mile from the nearest gate at perhaps the most inexplicable and least plausible part of the Park. As the chauffeur clambered round to open the door, she found time to say, "You shan't go! I tell you, I won't let you go"; then her voice became decorous and conventional in the man's hearing.

"'Fraid I must get out here," said Deryk elaborately. "Mustn't be late, you know. Good-bye."

From that day he had not seen her, and the uncertainty whether she was taking him at his word or preparing to launch another attack haunted him until the moment when the train gathered speed and slid away from Charing Cross. Then something told him instinctively that he had won, that no fresh attack would be launched, even when he returned to England, and that, if it were, he could repel it without difficulty. Lucile Welman had gone out of his life unregretted, as she had come into it undesired; but he felt that she had taken something with her that he could never win back. His idealising reverence for women, artificially fostered through a lonely and shy boyhood, was gone; his very interest in them was dwindling out of recognition; he knew all that he wanted about women. . . .

The steamer made Anactis one night at eleven o'clock, and the party gathered itself and a formidable equipment into the single modest hotel. The caravan was under way by noon, and, after an interval for dinner and two more hours' ride in the moonlight, Felix led them to a flat expanse at the very foot of the mountains. For half a mile each way they saw that the surface had been broken into blue-grey ghostly dunes: in the streets laid bare and in the unrevealing flat turf under their feet lay all that remained of a city where once at such a time the night had resounded with the echo of footsteps and voices raised in altercation or laughter.

"Th-this is Hellenopolis," said Felix. "D'you re-recognise it, Yolande, from my description on the Terrace?"

They reined in their mules and sat gazing at the expanse of silver stillness. To their left clustered a dozen wooden shanties, and, as they looked, a man in blouse and loose trousers stamped out the fire, stared at them and came forward. "L-Luigi, my foreman," explained Felix. To the right were two bungalows, joined by a primitive veranda and containing three rooms in all. Ahead of them, after the flat tombstone which had lain for five centuries over Hellenopolis a bare, rocky mountain towered above them, rising with startling suddenness. The smooth blackness of its glistening face was broken by a torrent which leapt and foamed in a trellis of white cascades to the gloomy mouth of a cavern. Running underground for half a mile, it reappeared to their left and lost itself in the reed-grown, scum-specked swamp which filled the valley with malaria for a third of the year.

In the days when Hellenopolis was a popular township, the shrine of an oracle and the first house of call for thirty generations of Phœnician, Greek and Syrian merchants passing from Anactis over the foothills into the hinterland, the stream had flowed through the centre of the city, bearing with it a cleansing cold wind from the mountains and washing impurities far out to sea. In the five centuries of neglect and desolation following on the Turkish capture and sack, the sand on the foreshore had silted up to form the marsh, and in the destruction of the city the stream had changed its course.

"N-no one knows where it runs now," said Felix. "I'm always c-coming across it in unexpected places. It goes far too near my l-library for my peace of m-mind; we should have to stop work for a m-month, if we had to d-dam the stream and d-divert it."

He turned the head of his mule towards the bungalow, spoke for a moment with his foreman and began to move away, but his companions were fascinated by the spectacle of what had been done and the boundless possibilities of what remained to do.

"I wonder if Pompeii was like this," Yolande murmured.

"How was it when you first came here?" Deryk called out.

Felix swept his arm round the smooth, moonlit lawn and unreluctantly rode back to them.

"A stretch of grass to the foot of the mountain," he said, "with jagged c-corners sticking out here and there. You see the g-gradient; once you t-tamper with the lowest buildings, everything falls on top of them. According to the b-books, that first slope was covered with houses all b-buttressed by the b-buildings in the street. C-cut away the street, p-push the houses down the slope, clear away the people, p-postulate a moist climate where grass grows quickly, and N-Nature does the rest, as they say."

"But how did you find the place at all?" Yolande enquired. "No, I won't go to bed, Felix."

He withdrew his hand from her wrist and rubbed his forehead reflectively.

"I'd been out d-digging round the tomb of Pausanias," he explained. "They g-gave me a Wanscot travelling f-fellowship, you know, and, when I'd finished, I came across country and reined in about a yard from here. It's a w-wonderful sight, you know, the b-black rock and the one streak of white water; even n-now, when we've grown old together. . . . I l-looked and l-looked, trying to remember where I'd seen it before. Well, Deryk?"

"Anaximenes," cried Deryk eagerly.

Felix nodded with a chuckle.

"I s-said, 'We must be somewhere near Hellenopolis!' You're last from school, Deryk. What d'you know about the place?"

Deryk took time to consider.

"Strabo mentions it," he said. "And I seem to remember a pretty full account in Anaximenes——"

"But what was he doing there at all?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do, though! He was visiting Polycrates—'Hellenopolis sheltering under the protecting shadow of the mountain.'"

Felix took up his cue, as though they were playing a game.

"And Polycrates lived here from nineteen till forty-eight, when he went to Rome. The 'Rhetoric' was written here, Anaximenes saw the l-library. You re-remember his account of the house? Oh, but you must! He c-came in at the southern gate and particularly n-noticed the lions on the posts; there was a fountain further on, and he walked p-past it and on till he came to a barber's shop and a man being shaved in the street. He asks the barber to d-direct him to Polycrates' house, and the man who is b-being shaved says, if he'll w-wait a minute, he'll shew him the way himself. Of c-course, it's Polycrates in p-person. They g-go through the market-place and over a bridge;

Anaximenes comments on the stream, and Polycrates tells him that the c-city was stricken with p-plague till Heracles came to divert the course and drive the stream through the c-city. He tells the story for what it's worth; he's much too sceptical to b-believe it himself. Then they c-come to the house just opposite the last bridge in the street—I've found one arch of it—and it's the house that I've spent the last years uncovering." Behind their glasses his eyes gleamed with excitement, and he was out of breath. "For Heaven's sake r-read your Anaximenes again, D-Deryk."

Again he turned his mule's head towards the bungalow, but Yolande rode after him and caught his arm.

"What then?" she demanded.

"Complete b-blank till 1300," Felix answered. "My dear, you *m-must* go to bed, or I shan't get any work out of you to-morrow. M-Marco Polo returned to Venice in 1295, and his pupil Marino was so m-much fired that he had to start out on his own account. He only w-went through Greece and Asia Minor into P.-Persia and was b-back again in five years' time, as against Polo's twenty-four. And he's a b-bad authority at any time, no p-perspective, no arrangement, you n-never quite know what year or country you're in. But he c-came here and found that the oracle was now the shrine of a Christian saint; he d-describes the mountain, which struck *him* too, t-tells us that the harbour was hardly used and that the whole c-city was a pretty fair dead-and-alive place. Then"— Felix laughed with nervous impatience—"then he drags in a two-page account of a new way of serving wild boar."

Yolande took a last look at the ghostly dunes and urged her beast towards the bungalow.

"And nothing about the library?" she asked.

"N-not a word. Anaximenes visited the p-place in 174 B.C.; b-barring Strabo's one reference, we never hear of it again till 1300 or 1301, and then there's another b-blank for a hundred and forty years."

"When the Turks came?"

Felix nodded with unusual vehemence.

"Hateful people!" he cried. "They can't even sack a c-city like gentlemen. Hellenopolis comes in a list of places destroyed by Othman Ali on his way across Greece. He d-doesn't say whether he burned it, or massacred the inhabitants and left the place to fall into ruin, or what. And that m-makes just all the difference. If he b-burnt the town, it's a m-million to one that the l-library was burnt too, except that it was a bit out of the way and b-below street level. D-don't be disappointed if we find nothing; I shan't."

"Oh, Felix!"

"My dear, I shan't. I dug this up pretty well single-handed when the Germans said that there was no such p-place. I fancy this'll t-take some explaining away. Now c-come and see your quarters."

The larger bungalow was made over to Felix and his wife; the smaller, once the home of the foreman, accommodated Deryk and a camp kitchen. From the outset Yolande ordained that they constituted a republic and that she was entitled to share equally in the common work; the truckle beds were made, the table laid, the meals served and the enamelled mugs and plates washed by each in turn; in the evenings, while the men wrote up their journals, she was allowed to mend their tattered clothes; in return they lit the fire and rode twice a week to Anactis for letters and provisions. Deryk had made it clear on the way out that Felix need not limit himself to the emoluments of his professorship; extra labour and new appliances he would supply at his own expense.

"*I* had that feeling when I b-began," sighed Felix the first night. "T-twenty years of this gives you w-wonderful patience. You want the whole thing finished to-morrow?"

Deryk hesitated, laughed and finally decided not to answer.

"You have to be patient," Felix went on, "as soon as you see what a tre-tremendous lot of energy is n-needed to scratch up anything."

"But if we *can* ginger things up a bit?" Deryk urged.

"I'm in no hurry. It's all my life, you see. *If* we finished to-morrow, I shouldn't know what to do."

"Nor would Deryk," said Yolande. "He's restless at present, but I'm going to cure that."

The following day they breakfasted at six, and Felix conducted them, almost bursting with excitement, to the incline which led down to the Lion Gate and the Street of Bridges. Twenty years before a jagged angle of stone had protruded through the grass, and Felix, digging round and clearing the earth and stones, had persevered until he had uncovered a single gate-post with a defaced lion's head on top. After that it had seemed worth while to go on, and for most of Deryk's life and all of Yolande's he had dug his way down the main street, laying bare the remains of its six bridges, uncovering the foundations of the houses on either side and clearing the rectangular, dwarf market-place. Twice twenty years would not suffice to conjure the city from its grave, and he had left all else to identify the "house opposite the bridge" and to seek among its tumbled stones for a buried library. During the autumn and winter his men, under the supervision of the scowling Luigi, had dug under the lines which he had traced; the site of Polycrates' house, like a square, smooth-topped tumulus, stood erect and commanding.

"We'd better g-get to work," he told Yolande and Deryk.

2

With the three principals toiling nine hours a day, with the native labour doubled and with an output of energy many times multiplied by the menace of Felix's supervising eye, six weeks passed before the shell of Polycrates' house had been laid bare. Of the upper half nothing remained, but by the end of March an open stone box, with spongy earth, rock plants, brute masonry and fragments of carved stone brimming over its breached sides, was beginning to define itself. In the early weeks there was much talk during the day and much excited discussion at night, but, as they dug deeper, a silent determination laid hold of all three. They rose mechanically with the sun, worked until noon, rested their appointed two hours and went on working until it was time for supper. Neither Yolande nor Deryk spoke, after the first week, of going back for one more hour; both had tried the effect of spasmodic nervous overstrain and both had rebelliously decided that Felix knew more of their difficulties and resources than they did. After a month they were fine-drawn and trained to magnificent condition, with clear eyes and steady nerves. Deryk no longer complained that he had no appetite or could not sleep: it was rather Yolande's complaint that he ate more than his fair third of the food, and Felix's that he could never wake him in the morning.

On one day in seven they did no work. Raymond Stornaway was making it his business to send them papers and books, and every Saturday Felix or Deryk would ride to Anactis, meet the incoming island steamer and return with rich booty. If Deryk had to spend Sunday wrinkling his forehead over foolscap pages of technicalities from Hatherly, he did not now complain; the business which had once frightened him began to fascinate him; it had been easy to talk of millions here and millions there, but the words had little meaning for him until he found himself authorising transfers of a hundred thousand pounds, selling his interest in some enterprise in Tennessee or acquiring new interests in Colorado. He was clear in his own mind that he did not propose to spend his life as unpaid steward of his own estate, but the size of his own possessions touched his imagination.

Before leaving England he had talked idly with Raymond of buying himself a house in London. He had almost forgotten the conversation when he received a half-jocular letter telling him that the club house of the old "Hanoverians" in Pall Mall was shortly coming into the market and suggesting that he should buy it and spend a few happy months pulling it to pieces and rebuilding it. Deryk thought over the proposal for a week and then asked Raymond to make further enquiries and ascertain what price was likely to be asked. He knew the house well enough to appreciate its possibilities and, with his first crude understanding of his own power, he was glamoured by the thought of making himself such a home as no one had ever seen before.

On Sundays, when all three had lain late a-bed and by a self-denying ordinance kept away from the scene of their week-day labours, the journals were untouched, and they were wont to sprawl in wicker chairs before the brazier in the kitchen, reading a week's accumulation of daily papers and trying to understand why the distance of one or two thousand miles from England should so blunt their susceptibilities to the hysterical appeal of English politics.

"I'm sorry. I can't take the least interest in the Irish question," said Yolande, surrendering her paper to Deryk. "They all seem very angry about it, and there's going to be civil war and the officers at the Curragh are refusing to fight or something. I don't really care in the least. Give me the next one, Felix; I want to see if anybody I know is getting married."

She began reading again and then stopped abruptly, looking over the top of the paper to see whether either of the others was watching her.

"I want a cigarette," she announced. Deryk searched in his pockets and got up lazily to fetch a box from the screened half of the bungalow that formed his bedroom. While he was away she tore one sheet of the paper and began to make a spill. "It's only the outside page," she explained, when he came back.

That night she told Felix that Sidney Dawson was dead.

"Deryk doesn't know," she went on with a puzzled expression. "I tore the announcement out before I knew what I was doing. He'll hear in due time, of course, and I don't in the least know why I didn't want him to see it, except, of course, that it was bound to bring all the old business back to him. It was just impulse, but I daresay it's all for the best. It's a horrid thing to say, but if only he'd died a year ago!"

A fortnight later they had further news from Raymond. ". . . I don't know whether it's in any of the papers I've been sending you," he wrote, "but Dawson died some weeks ago in Naples. I heard about it from our friend Jim Loring, who has just returned to England after Heaven knows how long cruising about in his yacht. I met him at dinner last week with the Oakleighs, and he told me he'd arrived just after the death. I didn't hear any particulars, but poor little Mrs. Dawson was quite prostrate. Loring was at the same hotel, and it appeared that the manager marked him down as an Englishman and hinted pretty clearly that he'd had one death in the hotel and didn't want a second. As you know, Loring's one of the kindest fellows on earth, and he did everything he could to see that she was properly looked after, even though he'd never seen or heard of her before; he'd have brought her back in his yacht, if she'd been in a fit state to move, but she was too bad for that, so he scoured Naples until he found the Denys Playfairs and put her in their charge. They are going to bring her back as soon as England's warm enough for Denys' lungs. There's going to be unpleasantness over the will, as Dawson's left everything, including both houses, to his wife; the allowance he used to make to his sister comes to an end automatically, and I don't know that she'll have enough to live on. Never be a trustee or an executor, chick,—it's a fool's game. . . ."

Yolande had a look at Deryk, who was lying asleep at full length on the floor.

"I still don't see what good purpose will be served by telling him," she whispered. "Every day gained is worth having. He was beginning to forget all about her, when he met her somewhere or other—never mind how I know; I *do*—and heard how Mr. Dawson was; of course that simply fanned the old trouble into a flame."

Felix was listening with scant comprehension.

"I d-don't quite follow," he confessed. "D-d'you want him to marry her or are you afraid he will or wh-what?"

"Oh, he won't marry her. She was just a passing episode, though he *might* have married her and they *might* have been very happy. I only want to keep him from brooding over his wasted life and that sort of nonsense. We've done him a lot of good, my dear, and we're going to take him back a new, whole, sane man."

By the middle of April they had cleared the shell of the house and were standing on a naked stone floor. Felix was temporarily at fault, because, though the floor rang hollow, there was no trace of any way down into the cellar which was to establish once and for all time whether they had found the library. To excavate outside for a staircase was to add three months to their work, and Felix decided to cut through the floor. It was late evening when he marked out the lines for the morrow's work, and his order to return home was met with signs of mutiny.

"There are hours of light," cried Deryk, pointing to the moon. "I'll pay the men double for overtime."

"It's waited f-five hundred years," Felix reminded him.

"I only want to grub about on top," Yolande pleaded with fine show of reason. "Honestly, I'm not going to do any more work; I just want to see if this looks like the right place."

Felix took her by one arm and Deryk by the other.

"I have sp-spoken," he said. "You'll only knock yourselves up, if you g-go on. And it isn't just getting down there; we shall have plenty to do when we're there."

He dragged them half-way home, and they ended by racing like children on condition that they were allowed to come and have a last look after supper.

"I only hope that you're not g-going to be disappointed," he observed gloomily. "You ch-children are so certain, but I regard it as a w-wild improbability. Five hundred years, p-probably a fire, certainly a p-peculiarly ruthless army——"

Yolande put her hand over his lips.

"Darling, you make me tired, when you talk like this," she complained. "You wouldn't go on, if you really thought it so improbable."

He drew away her hand and slipped it through his arm.

"*If* we b-bring it off," he said, "it's the b-biggest thing since the Renaissance. And, if we don't, we've still got enough to f-fill a new wing at the British M-Museum. P-put in a spade anywhere——"

Deryk wrinkled his nose disapprovingly.

" 'Brown Greek manuscripts,' " he quoted.

"You won't find them!" Felix exclaimed with a sudden note of certainty. "Why should you? You w-wouldn't expect to find a library of even King Alfred's time in an English house."

"Not if it had been bricked up ever since? Rot, Felix!" said Deryk decisively. "Things three times as old as that are being found daily."

Felix sighed uncertainly.

"It was b-better protected, of course." His face lit up at the recollection. "D-Deryk, you remember your Anaximenes? They d-dined in state, and Polycrates brought out some wine that he'd bought as a boy and hadn't touched, because he only drank water now. And Anaximenes didn't think much of it and was too polite to say s-so. And afterwards they went downstairs through a secret door to a l-long cavern, where the manuscripts were kept on shelves—r-rather like an umbrella-shop, Yolande—and Anaximenes had never seen anything like it before, and P-Polycrates couldn't tell him anything except that it was s-said to be part of the old river-bed b-before Heracles diverted the stream." His voice lost its momentary eagerness and became diffident again. "Th-that's our only hope, of course. When I first read Anaximenes after finding this place, I f-felt that there was the chance. A hidden d-door of some kind, below street level; it *m-might* have escaped notice, his successors *may* have left it alone, there c-certainly *was* rock and stone all round to protect it. B-but it seems unlikely, doesn't it?"

His despondency, deepening throughout the evening, began in time to affect his companions, but in the morning they had recovered their faith, and he succeeded with difficulty in persuading them to eat any breakfast. From seven o'clock until noon the hollow shell of the house rang with the strokes and echoes of steel picks on stone. Felix had chalked a generous square in the middle of the floor, and his men were cutting on all four sides at once. At noon they retired to their shanties, but even Felix was now too much excited to go home. Taking one corner where the stone was cut deepest, the three of them stood in a triangle, like pile-drivers, striking in turn. The sweat was running into Deryk's eyes, and he could hear Yolande sobbing with the effort, when the point of Felix's axe cut through and jammed.

"Stand back!" he cried. "It'll be p-pretty foul after five centuries."

Covering his nose and mouth with a handkerchief, he worked his axe loose, and all three began chipping the edges of the hole. A creak was followed by a sound of tearing, and Felix dropped his pick and jumped backwards with arms outstretched, again crying, "Stand back!" The chalked rectangle bent slowly down, as though dragged from below, broke off short at the marked base and fell like a window blown in through its casement.

"My dear, I'm glad you weren't standing there!" Yolande exclaimed breathlessly. "You tell *me* to stand back and then—oh, darling, you've gone quite white, I didn't mean to tease you!"

Still breathing hard, Felix removed his spectacles and began to wipe them.

"Did you hear the stone fall?" he asked.

"I was waiting to see what was happening to my husband," she answered, pressing his arm.

"Do you hear anything now?"

Yolande listened intently. After the hollow ring of the picks and the sound of their own raised voices, the silence was profound. Deryk advanced cautiously a pace nearer the black cavity. An almost inaudible noise of lapping, like the movement of an animal or the soughing of the wind, was borne steadily upwards. He stood for a moment with head bent sideways and then moved forward again; as he did so, his foot struck a splinter of stone and shot it into the yawning blackness of the vault. Immediately there came an unmistakable splash.

"Water?" asked Yolande in surprise.

"You didn't hear it the first time," Felix explained, "because you were waiting to see me f-follow the floor."

Deryk frowned impatiently.

"Oh, Lord! this means pumping," he said. "Have you got pumps, Felix, or shall we have to send for some? If so, I'd better ride over to Anactis at once and get off a cable."

Felix replaced his spectacles and looked from one to the other.

"The w-water won't inconvenience us," he said quietly.

"Think not?"

"I'm sure of it." He laid a hand on the shoulder of each. "Our w-work's over here."

Yolande looked at him with startled, unbelieving eyes.

"What d'you mean?" she asked almost indignantly. "It may not be anything; you don't know."

Felix smiled and shook his head wistfully.

"B-better face it, Yolande," he advised her. "I t-told you to look out for foul air, but this is as fresh and pure as it is outside—and a good deal cooler. *Th-that* isn't stagnant water; it's the stream; I always wondered where it got to hereabouts. It's r-really interesting, this; Polycrates was quite r-right in the story he told Anaximenes; the vault *was* p-part of the old river-bed—before Heracles diverted the stream. S-someone must have broken down Heracles' dam, and the river's gone b-back to its old bed."

Deryk looked at him with mouth blankly open. Then he murmured,

"My God!"

"D-don't be disappointed!" laughed Felix. "We've done a g-good morning's work—settled the course of the stream, confirmed Anaximenes as a t-trustworthy authority. Now I want some food."

He clambered over the piled-up earth and masonry, offered Yolande a hand and jumped down into the street.

The others followed, because there was nothing else very obvious for them to do. On reaching the street, Deryk caught him excitedly by the arm.

"Well, we're through here, I suppose?" he began. "There's nothing for it but to go back and say we've failed."

"I've only j-just started," Felix answered. "You're bound to get occasional d-disappointments; otherwise the thing w-wouldn't be worth doing."

"I'm going back," said Deryk.

"N-not if you're worth your salt."

"I'm going back," Deryk repeated. "This chapter's closed."

"Another?" asked Yolande. She spoke with demure mockery, but within she was furious that at such a time Deryk should be thinking of himself. As he strode tragically forward, she held her husband in check and pulled his head down until she could kiss him. "Cheer up, old man," she whispered. "I hate people to shew when they're hurt! It isn't done!"

Felix looked away for a moment and then broke into a laugh that was hardly certain of itself.

"I was thinking of old Polycrates," he exclaimed. "No one but a philosopher would dream of making a l-library out of a disused river-bed. A philosopher or an archæologist," he added.

That afternoon Deryk rode over to Anactis and returned impenitent with the announcement that the boat which arrived at the end of the week would bear him by way of Crete to Athens, where he would take train for Patras and pick up a second steamer to Brindisi.

"I'm in this for any money you like," he told Felix, "but I can't stay here after this morning. I mean, what is one staying for? You might stop here, digging up pots and pans, all your life."

"You m-might indeed," Felix rejoined.

"That's not my theory a bit. I—er, I shall simply be a wet blanket, you know. It's better for me to clear out. I shall go to Brindisi, cross over to Naples, stay a few days in Rome and make my way back. There are a good many things waiting for me at home——"

"Oh, Deryk, don't make excuses!" begged Yolande.

"All right! I haven't the backbone to go on, if you like."

The atmosphere was uncongenial, and he went out to finish his pipe in the moonlight.

"If he's going to Naples, I must tell him who he's likely to meet there," said Yolande to Felix, when they were alone.

3

Deryk was accompanied to Anactis by Yolande and Felix, and, as they shook hands and waved good-bye, he pretended not to see that they were disappointed in him. After all, he had come to Hellenopolis for one purpose, and in that they had failed; what more remained to do?

"He's like a child," Yolande told her husband, as they rode back. "He always does what he wants to do and is genuinely distressed, if everyone doesn't approve."

Deryk, as he watched them jogging down the quay and through the town, felt that it was ridiculous of them to be going back, but none the less that he ought to be going back with them. . . .

On their way to Anactis Yolande had mentioned the letter in which her uncle told her of Sidney Dawson's death. Deryk pigeon-holed the subject for further discussion with himself, but its immediate effect on his mind was to decide him not to go nearer Naples than Brindisi. So long as Idina was in trusted hands, he need not come to her rescue; beyond that he hardly knew what he thought or wanted. Love had been followed by bitterness, and bitterness by indifference; after indifference came an hysterical moment; he had to look back through the clouds of his nervous breakdown, and it was impossible to say what he felt or how deeply he felt it. He was satisfied that Idina had not been rooted from his heart so completely as he had once thought, but he did not know what strength of foothold she had established there. Certainly he did not want to meet her now; the news of her husband's death was only welcome in so far as it delivered her from the agony in which he had found her four months earlier; he did not know whether he ever wanted to meet her again. . . .

On arriving in London he called on Raymond and reported the results of nearly two months' work in Asia Minor. As his account proceeded, he was conscious that Raymond was tacitly wondering why two had remained behind and one returned. The sense of unspoken criticism embarrassed him, and he hastened to justify himself by an assumed self-depreciation.

"I only went out there for the sensational coup," he remarked. "When that didn't come off, I chucked up the party. It isn't good enough to devote your life to an anticlimax."

"Of course, you're not quite a free agent," said Raymond quietly. "Did you find any time out there for thinking about the future?"

Deryk cleared his throat and beat the side of his leg with his umbrella.

"I'm going down to Ripley Court to-night," he said. "I shall spend a good deal of my time there till Hats has given me the hang of the business— By the way, I'm going to take that house."

"You might do far worse," said Raymond. "But, on the larger question, have you thought out a scheme of life?"

"I can't say that I have."

"Did you try?"

Deryk laughed uneasily.

"I can't say that I did. I honestly don't know where to start, sir. I get a thousand and one appeals for money and I do my best to answer them judiciously."

"Anyone can do that," Raymond murmured.

"Well, I can't see beyond it," said Deryk impatiently.

Raymond shook his head good-humouredly.

"Come, come! That won't do," he said. "You haven't tried. If you collected the world's twelve greatest authorities on cancer and offered them a million to stamp out the disease, that would be something beyond the ordinary round of charity. But have you never thought how, with your money, you could re-educate the world? We've got a curious public-school standard of honour—we don't lie much, or steal, or sneak, or let a man down—but it's amazingly limited. Have you ever thought how a new standard in education would improve it? So that a man would no more think of drinking too much when he's among men than he would if he were with women? So that you'd no more think of paying a clerk insufficient wages than you would of taking coppers out of his coat pocket?" Raymond hesitated in an attempt to compress his teaching into a single apothegm. "The new great ethical attack has to be launched against the cruelties and dirtinesses and dishonesties which are sanctioned by everyday custom and extolled as part of our competitive theory of survival. Do you think you could educate people out of *that* frame of mind?"

Deryk assumed an expression of regretful worldliness.

"You can't alter human nature, sir," he objected.

"That, my dear Deryk, has been said in every generation and disproved by every generation. People are lazy; and peculiarly lazy, you'll find, when it comes to radical thinking. Go down to Ripley Court and think."

One result of the interview was hardly intended by Raymond. As Deryk made his way to the door, he came to an obstinate determination that the interview should be the last of its kind. With an eager will to make the best of his opportunities, he only found questioners who asked what he proposed to do or oracles who told him that he must find out for himself. They did not appreciate that he was really trying to oblige *them*. He did not for a moment admit Yolande's contention that it was his duty to pay the money back to society; still less did he regard himself as a life trustee of a public fund. The money was his, but there was so much of it that he was looking for useful and beneficial outlets. Raymond, who professed to have well-weighed ideas on the subject, ought to be grateful for the blank promises which he had received; he, apparently, not only thought that the world was a cruel and unhappy place, but cherished the belief that he could alter it.

"I shall go home for a bit," he told Raymond, "but I've done all the thinking I want to. The fact is, you know, as my father used to say, people have to work out their own salvation; it doesn't do to coddle them."

"I said you were an idle young scamp," Raymond observed. "Think sociologically and don't work off the ignorant *clichés* of an old maids' tea-party."

"Well, it isn't my business to set the world right."

"Then you'd better make it your business, my boy. Otherwise, you know, you'll feel you've made a fool of yourself when you come to die and find that you've done nothing, nothing, nothing with your life. If you were Shelley, just on the point of drowning, wouldn't you feel a fool if you'd walked about with your hands in your pockets instead of writing? Don't tell me that he was a poet and that you aren't. Poetry was his opportunity; money's yours, so don't waste any more of your youth." He dropped the bantering tone and beckoned Deryk back into the room. "Remember your father; he started too late. When he'd made his opportunity, he'd destroyed his power of using it. He couldn't even think how to use it . . . Go home and think, Deryk. I shouldn't say this to you, if you were a fool; I say it to you because you've shewn yourself to have brains, and I believe you've as much imagination as your neighbours—which isn't much, by the way—and a wider experience in some respects."

Deryk spent a week in Sussex and then returned to his rooms in London. He promised Hatherly to come down for long week-ends and excused his flight by enlarging on the new house which he was buying in London. In fact it was the size and silence of Ripley Court and the want of companionship which drove him away. The work and Hatherly's patient expositions he could support, but a succession of luncheons and dinners with the two of them at opposite ends of the table tried his nerves beyond bearing.

They had nothing more to discuss. On their travels there had been new cities to explore, new friends to make on the steamer; he had really seen very little of his companion. Now he seemed to be assisting at an endless memorial service of his father; Sir Aylmer's life was encased within the steel walls of the study safe, Sir Aylmer's designs and desires formed the liturgy, Sir Aylmer's personality seemed to haunt the house until Deryk wondered by what force of character he had impressed himself so strongly on his associates. Perhaps they had simply refused to defy a slowly dying man. . . .

Throughout May and June he devoted three days a week to business. The rest of his time he spent in London, playing with his new house. For seventy years the Hanoverian Club had inhabited a square grey-stone building on the south side of Pall Mall, backing on Carlton Gardens and commanding St. James' Park from its top windows. The site was Crown property, and, when the lease expired, the club was unwilling to pay the new rent. Deryk had been attracted partly by a staircase copied from Egmorton House, partly by the possibilities of the rooms for entertaining and as a treasure house for pictures and furniture. Ripley Court had been filled to overflowing by his father; much of the furniture belonged to a period which Deryk abhorred, any pictures but the old Stornaway portraits were worthless in art; they were of his father's choice and collection, however, and he did not care to disturb them. Raymond, who never failed to find a man or woman for any purpose, brought him in touch with a young architect of recklessly profuse genius, who was awaiting his opportunity. For a week they explored the house, room by room; for another week the architect worked eighteen hours a day on his first plans; the two men, whose joint ages totalled less than fifty years, gesticulated and talked themselves hoarse for three days, and Deryk ordered specifications to be drawn and estimates invited. By the beginning of June scaffolding had spread from floor to roof of the square marble hall.

Before the work started and while it dragged out its leisurely course, he hailed every friend whom he met to come and see it. Some looked apprehensively at the size of the operations, others criticised openly and all volunteered suggestions, which Deryk heard patiently and swept aside as though they had never been made, even trying to convince his friends that they had not and could not have made them. He found it more difficult to find an answer to the question, however often repeated, why he had bought the house at all; and Hatherly, on being conducted round with Raymond, succeeded in unwittingly chilling Deryk's enthusiasm by putting his head perfunctorily into each room and observing,

"Ah, yes! Very nice, but I don't quite see why you want it," and then jerking out question after question, until Deryk broke away in despair and said that he had bought the place because it amused him to buy the place.

"It's a harmless amusement," said Raymond, coming unexpectedly to his rescue. "Don't run it down, Hatherly. He can make a very beautiful place of it."

"But he's got Ripley Court," protested Hatherly.

"Yes, but that's full of his father's things; there's no room to expand. Oh, I can quite appreciate a man's wanting to make his own collection and spread it about his own house."

Hatherly's nod suggested that such a view might be tenable, but that he did not hold it.

"I naturally imagined that he would spend most of his time in Sussex," he said.

Deryk grew suddenly intolerant of the conversation that was being carried on over his body. "Naturally" he was expected to bury himself at Ripley Court; his father had assumed that and only bought and lived in the house on that assumption; it had persevered to the end. Now there seemed to be a thinly veiled grimace of grievance, if he departed by one step from Sir Aylmer's ideal conception of his life.

"A man really must be allowed to decide where he wants to live," he exclaimed with dwindling patience. Hatherly was a good fellow, a dear fellow, but in some moods he seemed to have caught Sir Aylmer's trick of souring all enjoyment in a thing; it was exactly like Sir Aylmer's behaviour over the pearl necklace the first night of his return from abroad eighteen months before. The one inhibition has stolen his pleasure from all the other presents. . . . What had happened to the pearl necklace now? Though it was the cue for his ten months' tragic scene with his father, he had hardly thought of it since he threw it into a drawer and caught one last glimpse a few days later when he was collecting clothes for his flight to London. It was of no use now, but at one time he could have brought about great happiness with it, when Idina was poor. Now she was a rich woman. . . These things always came too late; the world was a place where you always got what you wanted as you ceased to want it. He had never actively desired the death of Sidney Dawson, still less of his own father, but, if either had died a year earlier, it would have made a profound difference to Idina's life and his own; Ripley Court would be habitable, if only he could bring in an atmosphere of youth, and he would find double his present pleasure in contriving the London house, if she had been there to share it. There was something, after all, in Hatherly's general criticism; it *was* rather absurd to buy a second palace when he was always complaining that the first one was too big.

"Have you had any news of Mrs. Dawson?" he asked Raymond suddenly. "The last I heard was that she was ill in Naples."

"She's back in England," Raymond answered. "We had a long talk on business matters a week ago. She's been pretty bad, Deryk."

"Has she been back long?" Deryk asked, trying to keep his tone indifferent.

"About a month. She hasn't been in town much, though; I'm getting rid of the Eaton Square house and the place in Sussex for her, and in the meantime she's living at the

Hans Crescent Hotel, when she's not vegetating in the country. She'll be in London again next week."

He threw the information out like a man forcing an opportunity, and Deryk instinctively drew back. He was not going to have his mind made up for him by others; he knew the truth, and they did not; above all he was not going to be hurried; Raymond could keep his suggestions to himself until *he* had decided whether he wanted to meet her again.

"What's happened to—well, I suppose she's Idina's sister-in-law now?" he asked.

"Miss Dawson? She's living at Tunbridge Wells," Raymond answered shortly.

He did not mention the struggle which he had had with Idina to secure the means of letting Miss Dawson live there or anywhere. The will explicitly left everything to the widow, and Idina's eyes had blazed with an exultant and alien fire of revenge when she found her tormentor at her mercy; she told Raymond hysterically that she would let her starve to death before she helped her. "My dear, you'd regret it," he told her, "and you must forgive me for warning you that you're simply making a—behaving very foolishly, if you do anything now that you'll regret afterwards. What you're going to do is to pay Miss Dawson an annuity. If you refuse, I shall pay it out of my own pocket, and that cuts the ground from under your feet."

Deryk brought the tour of his house to an end and stood for a moment in the hall, looking up at the circular skylight, on which the gallery and hall depended for illumination during the day. An idea had come to him, and, when his friends passed out into Pall Mall, he hurried upstairs, forgetting Idina in the excitement of novelty, and scrambled up the fire escape on to the roof. All south-west London lay beneath him in diamond clarity of outline; beyond Carlton Gardens, the Mall, and beyond the Mall a green stretch of grass, a blue mirror of unruffled water, fig-trees in fruit and chestnuts in leaf. Through the frame of the Admiralty Arch a stunted, many-coloured procession of cars and carriages poured into Trafalgar Square from Whitehall and the Strand; the muffled roar of traffic came like sound in a dream; foreshortened, hurrying foot-passengers raced and jostled each other with absurd pre-occupation. To the south the wireless installation of the Admiralty reared itself easily above the dwarfed, obsolete Horse Guards, the Foreign Office jutted forbiddingly out to the border of the curving road, and in the distance a squat Wesleyan dome measured itself pertly beside the grey towers of the Abbey.

Deryk looked beyond it, fascinated by the extent of the view and amused by his own fancies in assigning personal attitudes and qualities to the buildings. Watchful and brooding, the tower of Westminster Cathedral dominated the secular south-west of a heretic capital, challenging Parliament to the contemplation of an œcumenical empire and patronising the upstart pretentiousness of Buckingham Palace. Constitutional Hill, St. James' Palace, the Victoria Memorial flashing green, white and gold in the afternoon sun, and once more the beginning of the Mall completed the circle.

"Some view," he murmured. With an effort he dragged himself away, skirted the glass dome in the middle of the roof and sat down on the parapet to contrast the outlook on the north. It was the first time he had been on a height so unprotected since the days when he went to Switzerland every Christmas; then he had boasted a steeplejack's head and he was reassured to find it still steady. He leaned forward to take in the substance and solid worth of Waterloo Place, Pall Mall—with its air of being always Sunday afternoon—the opening ascent of St. James' Street and the vanishing point of Cleveland Row. To his fancy the plebeian motor omnibuses, which ran westward up Cockspur Street, seemed to hesitate and lose confidence in themselves until they escaped northward by the Haymarket or Lower Regent Street. It was a subfusc backwater of palaces, ducal mansions, clubs and expensive, old-fashioned shops. Norfolk House, the Junior Carlton and the distant roof of the London Library dominated the view and frowned impartially on the unbegrimed pallor of the Automobile Club and the peeling, grey-black stone of his own house.

The more he looked, the stronger grew his determination to utilise the broad flat roof and secure the means of enjoying his glorious view. One staircase needed to be brought a storey higher, the lighting dome must be replaced by a sheet of glass and the roof must be enclosed to form a winter garden. He walked to and fro, exulting in his new scheme, planning its outlines and trying to imagine its finished effect. It was almost time to dress for dinner before he had done, and even then he could not leave his new-found empire without a sigh. The great house seemed dark and deserted, when he entered it again after the sunlight of the roof, and for the first time he was almost dismayed by the spaciousness and number of the rooms; the place was only half the size of Ripley Court, but it was half as large again as any London house that he knew.

"What the deuce am I going to do with it?" he murmured impatiently; then he grew more impatient, because he was talking to himself, and to think aloud was with him an invariable symptom of over-strain. "I don't suppose I could stand the place alone for a single week, but I'm equally sure that I've never met the person that I could—now—stand to share it with me."

He had paused with his hands in his pockets and his head bent forward at the last half-landing where Hatherly and Raymond had stood before leaving two hours earlier, discussing Idina's health and prospects. Ever since he had heard at Anactis of her widowhood, he had appreciated that a problem had to be faced; so far he had resolutely refused to face it; his love for Idina a year before, his faith in their common happiness were subjects of which he would think endlessly, especially late at night, when he felt unrestrained and could indulge the luxury of self-pity. He had never considered dispassionately how much he still cared for her and whether he wanted to marry her.

"I don't want to marry anyone," he told himself evasively. "We should simply get fed up with each other in a week."

Then he knew that the problem would not bear further shirking; for an hour, as he walked about the Park, he examined himself without reservation or hypocrisy. At the end he felt limp and exhausted, but he had established to his own satisfaction that he was as fond of Idina as he had ever been; he was also satisfied that after eighteen months he required firmer foundation for marriage than their old boy-and-girl love. It would be rash to meet her unless he were sure that he needed her; in the next moment he appreciated that he had been able to live without her for a year.

"But she wasn't a free woman then," he told himself defensively.

A clock in the neighbourhood began chiming a quarter, and he found that he was already half an hour late for dinner.

4

Their meeting, when it took place, was unpremeditated. Deryk was so busy throughout the summer that he had no time, even if he had decided to have the inclination, to go where he was likely to meet Idina. On settling in London he had made up his mind to enjoy himself; for a week or two he accepted invitations and impetuously secured himself a box at Covent Garden. Then the house in Pall Mall provided a new distraction, and everything else passed out of mind. He lunched and dined at the County Club, went down to Sussex once a fortnight instead of every week-end and discontinued the parties which he had for a month so industriously gathered round him. The box at the opera went begging, and he lived all day and a large part of the night within the shell of his new house or in a feverish passage from shop to sales-room and sales-room to shop. Hatherly would call on him in bed and pin his attention to business for half an hour, but to the rest of his friends he was inaccessible.

When the Manistys returned to England at the beginning of July, Yolande wasted a week's effort in trying to make him call; and, when he came, it was uninvited and unannounced at ten o'clock in the evening, as she was finishing dinner. His presence was made known by a sound of music from the drawing-room, and her maid explained in some confusion that a strange young gentleman, giving no name, had forced his way in, enquired whether dinner was over and stated that he would sit in the drawing-room until Mrs. Manisty was ready to see him. Yolande excused herself to her guests and hurried away.

"I *said* you weren't to be disturbed!" Deryk cried impatiently, as she came in.

"I thought it must be you," answered Yolande. "It's all right, I'll go back immediately, but I wanted to tell you that Uncle Raymond and—Dina are dining here."

Deryk continued playing to himself, with his eyes averted.

"And she doesn't want to meet me?" he suggested at length.

"I can't say. She doesn't know you're here. I thought I'd better warn you."

He nodded his thanks.

"If she doesn't mind meeting me, I don't mind meeting her," he said. "It's pretty well bound to come sooner or later as long as we've got friends in common. You'd better tell her, though, before she comes in; if she jibs, hide her away for a moment, while I escape."

Yolande returned to the dining-room and forced the attention of her guests away from her mysterious visitor. When the meal was over and she broke the news in a whispered colloquy outside the door, Idina only flushed and said,

"Come in with me, and I shall be all right."

The drawing-room was in darkness, and they made no sound above the music as they came in. Only the sudden draught and the bellying of the curtains forced Deryk to turn round.

"You must excuse these clothes," he began volubly. "I hadn't time to change, I hadn't time to dine even—no, honestly I won't have anything, I'm not hungry—I'd have got round before, if I could—" He held out his hand and transferred his nervous volubility to Idina. "Are you all right again?" he asked. "I was most awfully sorry to hear you'd been so ill. Jim Loring brought the news, I understand; is he in England now? I haven't seen him for years."

"Yolande's been telling me about your work in Asia Minor," said Idina, catching the nervous contagion. "No, I haven't seen Lord Loring since I got back. It must have been a frightful disappointment to you all, but, as Dr. Manisty says, if you don't have occasional disappointments, you don't have anything."

Yolande cut short the stilted prattle by bringing two chairs forward.

"No reason why we should all stand, is there?" she asked. "Deryk, if you won't have any dinner, you can at least have some coffee. Ring the bell, there's a dear child."

Ten minutes later Felix and Raymond entered to find all three elaborately inspecting the chair-covers and curtains, still avoiding each other's eyes and still keeping the conversation neutral, but without any other noticeable appearance of tension. Deryk captured his host and plunged with him into a discussion of the later excavations at Hellenopolis, while Raymond in turn submitted to being led round to admire the furniture and hangings.

"Deryk hasn't had time to shew you *his* new place, I suppose?" he asked. "I think you must give a party, Deryk. This is quite disinterested, because I shan't be there; I've got to go to Vienna again next week."

"Stealing more doctors?" Yolande enquired.

He nodded.

"You won't get any, sir," Deryk predicted. "They'll want all they've got for Servia. With any luck there's going to be a scrap there, if the Servians don't accept the Austrian ultimatum."

"Ah, but they will," Raymond answered. "It's monstrously unfair, but they can't do anything else, and the Russians aren't in a position to help them—any more than they were in a position to stop Austria half a dozen years ago, when she annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. It won't come to fighting, or I can assure you that I shouldn't be going there. I like travelling in comfort, and you don't do that when the military authorities have taken over the railways."

Deryk brought a chair to the sofa where Yolande and Idina were sitting, and they arranged a date for lunching with him and inspecting the house. Their attitude was now free from strain, and he found himself describing his father's death to Idina, giving her news of Hatherly and her other friends at Aston Ripley and putting sympathetic and intimate questions on her own movements. Yolande got up to give her uncle another cigar and stayed by him, leaving Idina to talk undisturbed. Deryk learned that Sidney Dawson had died of dropsy in circumstances of disfigurement, blindness, pain and madness which could hardly be described, had Idina wished to do so. For weeks after his death she had lain with her own life hanging by a thread; then her youth had asserted itself, and she had come back to England resolved to live.

Deryk stole a sideways glance at her and was astonished to find so little trace of change. She was dressed in half mourning, she wore a wedding-ring, her eyes looked tired; that was all. And she was eighteen months older than when he returned to England with Hatherly. His wandering attention was caught by a reference to her future plans. She was getting rid of her two houses—her two houses! She looked a fair-haired *débutante,* and he had to remind himself that she was a rich woman, a widow, in the early twenties, ready to begin life again. Something that was either jealousy or a paternal protectiveness warned him that she stood lonely and exposed— She was getting rid of her two houses and had taken a cottage on the south coast where she could amuse herself with a garden. . . He was moved to recognise the inadequacy of the life—striking roses and designing borders from twenty to seventy! It was as inadequate as his own! "My brother's going into the navy. You remember Martin?" Deryk had never thought of the boy for a year and a half, since Sir Aylmer sent him to Wellington. "He *was* going into the army, but that takes so long. Before I—quite knew where I was, you know, your father suggested his going to Dartmouth. He's grown enormously." Deryk's attention wandered again, as he tried to reconcile his father's public and private conduct to the Penroses. In his last confession he had never made really clear the one thing that mattered in his son's life. . . .

They were still talking slowly and thinking long between their sentences, when Raymond crossed over and held out his hand.

"I don't want to break up the party," he told them, "and Yolande says you mustn't think of going yet, but I've got work to do before I go to bed. Mrs. Dawson, if you want to see me again on business, it must be within the next week. After that I shall be on my way to Vienna."

As he bowed himself out, Deryk looked at his watch.

"A quarter past eleven, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "Look here, can I give you a lift, Dina? My car's outside, and I'll drop you anywhere. We must hurry, though, or I shan't get any supper, and I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast."

Idina jumped to her feet and was hurried away to get her cloak, while Felix gave Deryk a drink and walked downstairs with him. As the car drove away, he slipped his arm through his wife's and stood on the steps, looking up at the stars.

"It w-went off all right, I think," he said with a sigh of relief. It was their first effort at entertaining in their little Chelsea house and even Yolande had been nervous.

"I wonder what those two are going to do," she murmured, watching the tail-lights disappear down the road.

"You're an imp-p-penitent match-maker, darling," said Felix.

"No, I'm not. I wouldn't take the responsibility with Deryk. He needs a lot of handling, and I don't at all know that Dina's the sort of woman he wants. I don't know really what he *does* want." She sighed perplexedly and led her husband back into the house. "I shan't be a bit surprised, if they do marry. Deryk's never been in love with anyone—not as I understand love—but he *thinks* he was in love with her." She laughed uneasily. "It's a sort of superstition, as some people think new bread doesn't agree with them. And of course Dina imagines she wrecked his life and would do anything to make amends. Besides, she'd fall in love with anyone that was kind to her." There was another sigh and a second uneasy laugh. "People are a great nuisance, aren't they, darling?"

"It's none of our business," Felix reminded her.

"Oh, you can't get rid of it like that! I always feel as if Deryk were my own dear, beautiful, naughty, attractive, selfish, generous, wilful little son. I've known him so long, Felix dear; he's had a rotten life, and there's so much good in him, and it'll all go to waste, if we're not careful."

As the car headed for the Hans Crescent Hotel, Deryk suggested diffidently that he supposed Idina would not care to have supper with him somewhere, or, at least, to keep him company, while he ate.

"Unless you're tired," he added hastily, wondering why he had given an obviously superfluous invitation.

"I should like it," she said after a moment's hesitation. "It's been very pleasant, seeing you again, Deryk. And, when I'm settled in my cottage, I don't suppose we shall meet much."

He picked up the speaking tube and directed his chauffeur to drive to the Carlton Grill Room.

"Do you remember the last time we drove together?" she asked, as he leaned back again. The words were hardly framed as a question, but they made him shiver.

"Honestly, I hardly do," he answered quickly. "It was just before my father died, and I had a sort of breakdown. For about a fortnight everything seems like a bad dream. You—you know the feeling that something you're saying or doing had been said or done before—you can't place it. I—to tell you the truth, I haven't *tried* to remember much about it."

Idina gathered her cloak closer round her shoulders.

"I haven't *tried,* but I can't help it," she said, covering her eyes with one thin hand. "I hoped, when I was ill, that I should forget everything, but I feel it will be years before I forget,—if I ever do. It seemed as if it would never end."

The car was turning into Pall Mall, and Deryk leaned forward to throw his cigarette away.

"It was only about six months," he expostulated. "That's not much in a lifetime, however bad the dream. I was thinking to-night, Dina, how extraordinarily young we both were. We seem to have been through a devil of a lot, but our average is still comfortably under twenty-five."

"I don't feel that," she answered. "I don't know what age I feel."

The Grill Room was only half-full, when they arrived, and Deryk had no difficulty in securing a table in one of the far bays. As the theatres emptied, the vacant seats began to fill, and he found himself bowing to one party after another.

"You seem to know everyone, Deryk," said Idina, who was looking about her with an interest not far removed from excitement. "It's an absurd thing to say, but I've never been out to supper in London before. You see, we lived in the country for so long, and, when I got back to England after my honeymoon, my husband's health became bad almost at once. Oh, wasn't that Lord Loring? I *should* like to thank him for all he did in Naples."

They crossed the room to a table where Loring and his sister were sitting with George Oakleigh and his cousin. On their way back, after a few moments' conversation, they were accosted by Summertown, who was giving supper to a supercilious-looking girl with hungry eyes and a cruel mouth. Oakleigh allowed a faint interest to betray itself in his urbane, kindly expression of boredom; Summertown stared unceremoniously and then reminded Idina, to the obvious displeasure of his companion, that they had met once at Ripley Court. It was not lost upon Deryk that Idina, who looked a lily against a dark background, was arousing interest in herself and that his presence in her company did nothing to diminish the interest. As he sat down, he could see George Oakleigh bent over the table, explaining; the eyes of the others were directed for a moment to the far bay before turning carelessly back to their own table. Deryk was suddenly annoyed; then he wondered why he was annoyed.

"You've told me nothing about yourself," he heard Idina saying.

"There's so little to tell," he answered, beckoning to the waiter and ordering himself a cigar. "When I got back from Asia Minor, I had some business to attend to; then I bought this house, and it's taken up all my time."

Idina was sitting with her chin upon her clasped hands, watching and listening, as she used to listen when he came home from school for the holidays. He had forgotten the look and the attitude.

"And when you've finished it?" she asked.

"I shall live there, I suppose."

As he said them, he knew that the words were untrue. He could no more live by himself in Pall Mall than in Sussex; hardly waiting to enquire whether he could live with anyone else, he decided that the joy of the new house lay in the rebuilding of it; even if he could endure the size and desolation of it, he could not simply take his meals and sleep there. Had he not just told Idina how young they both were? He could look forward to another fifty years of life, twice as many as he had lived so far.

"I didn't know whether you were going into politics or anything," she said.

"I don't know what to do, I don't know how to begin," he answered. "We're in the same boat, in a way. You must have more money than you know what to do with——"

"I'm thinking of giving most of mine away," she interrupted. "If I kept about three or four hundred a year and lived quite simply— The only thing is, I've a horror of being poor again. It was so dreadful before; you're so helpless. But I don't want all I've got now; I don't feel I've really a right to it."

She fidgeted with the hem of her scarf and looked up to find Deryk leaning forward eagerly.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I don't know."

He now threw himself back with an expression of disappointment.

"Ah! I hoped you were going to help me! I don't know what to do with mine; and I've a haunting feeling that all this money is going to spoil my life. I shall always be thinking of it, wondering how to use it, where to get rid of it; I shall be enslaved to it, attending to it daily until I have no time to lead my own life, whatever that may be."

His face was grown haggard, and his lower lip was thrust forward as though in rebellion against fate. . .

"Whatever that may be?" she repeated.

Deryk sighed and passed his hand wearily across his eyes.

"I seem to have done everything," he said. "I don't know *what* I want to do."

"I wish I could help you, dear Deryk," she answered softly.

At half-past twelve he led her upstairs and drove her to the Hans Crescent Hotel. As the car slowed down before the door, she pressed his hand gently.

"Thank you for everything, Deryk," she whispered. "That last drive, you know. You've forgotten it, but I can't tell you how much you steadied me, when I was almost out of my mind. All the time *he* was dying, I felt that you were thinking of me and being sorry for me. Bless you, dear Deryk!"

For want of anything to say, he kissed her hand.

"We've always been good pals," he said gruffly, as he groped for the handle of the door.

"You were a *jolly* good pal to me then!" she answered. "I'd—I'd have thrown myself under a train, if I'd had the courage."

"Then I'm glad you hadn't!" he laughed. "And you're glad, too, whatever you went through. You've no reason for not being happy now, Dina."

She made no answer, and he opened the door and helped her on to the pavement.

"I want to see you again," he told her, as they shook hands.

"But I'm lunching with you to see the new house."

"Ah, but that's a long way off. Will you dine with me to-morrow night?"

Idina looked into his eager face and lowered her eyes.

"I'm going back to the country to-morrow," she said. "I only came up for one night to dine with Yolande."

"You don't think you could stay another night?" he pleaded.

"Yes, if you want me to. I'll do anything you want me to, Deryk."

5

Deryk re-entered his car with a familiar, obstinate feeling that he was not going to sleep for many hours and that it was hardly worth trying. He picked up the speaking-tube and told the chauffeur to stop.

"How tired are you?" he asked. "I don't feel much like going to bed, and, if you're equal to it and you've enough petrol, we might go down to Ripley Court and spend the night there. We ought to do it in under two hours, but you'll have to drive me up to-morrow morning. I can't stand trains."

The man was growing better used to his master's eccentric times and movements than Deryk, perhaps, suspected. Without demur he turned the car towards the river, and in a quarter of an hour they were gliding through the South London suburbs. Deryk found himself comfortably tired after a long, hungry day and yet more comfortably lethargic after his late meal, but his brain was working steadily and, as it seemed, with penetrating clarity, flashing its light on scene after scene until they were connected in a unified whole. He saw Yolande, bare-armed and slender, with her hair boyishly parted over one eye, standing by the piano with an expression of embarrassment, warning him that Idina was in the house. He saw Yolande again, tactfully leaving them together on the sofa. . . And Summertown at the Carlton with his vindictive harpy guarding him. Idina was very young, very beautiful, and Lord Marling had little money to spare for his son's disreputable but expensive amusements. . . . He could almost hear George Oakleigh drawling out his explanation—"I've *met* her, I believe; *he's* rather a friend of mine. They were always supposed to be engaged, but she married some other fellow—I've forgotten his name—who died and left her a lot of money. . ." And no doubt Loring would interrupt to supply the name. . .

Deryk had the feeling that he was being regarded as the hero of a chequered but delightful romance, which all his friends were joining hands to forward. He sincerely wished that people would leave him alone. . . Then a flash of clarity shewed him that he was really to blame. He need not have stayed in Yolande's house, he need not have offered Idina a lift, or invited her to supper with him. . . Yet he had enjoyed it all, especially when he saw her with her chin on her hands and her eyes upon him; there was something friendly and caressing about her, he was grown used over many years to having her as a confidant, she had idolised and idealised him so delightfully. And certainly she had drawn out of him the best that he had to give. . . It was curious to think that once he had walked up and down the streets of London, cursing her—that he had tried to blot her from his memory and had prayed that he would not meet her again. . . They had both been through so much suffering that they met without recrimination and took up their lives where they had been interrupted; she was ready to marry him—he had no doubt of that from the moment when they said good-night. . .

The swift passage of the car made him drowsy and reminiscent, but he roused himself now to answer a question which had lain in cover at the back of his mind for three months. It had to be answered; he must make up his mind whether he wanted to marry Idina. She was devoted to him, they had known each other so long that marriage could not entail many surprises for either, she would fit herself into his life and not want to lead a life of her own; his friends would, of course, be hers, and she would not want to fill the house with tiresome people that he did not like. . . . He shuddered and laughed to think of the ragamuffins that Yolande would have introduced; his father, in his wisdom, had wanted him to marry Yolande! Among the many . . . He sighed to contemplate the frozen groove into which he would have been forced by marrying Summertown's sister; the Farwells were related to so many people! Yet his father had played with the idea of his marrying Sally Farwell. And with Sonia Dainton. He could almost hear Lady Dainton lightly referring to "my son-in-law, Sir Deryk Lancing, don't you know"; he could imagine Sonia restlessly whirling him through a monotonous round of "exclusive" parties and turning his house into a place where her friends with no other excuse for staying out of bed would congregate to play poker or roulette. Yet Idina had been turned away—or so he still believed—while the others were counted eligible! Idina was the only one who would not drive him mad in a week.

Day was breaking, and he sank deeper into his corner. Body and mind were tired, and some of their weariness infected his thoughts. Idina would be a restful wife, and he wanted rest. She was not likely to develop a strong personality of her own, but he did not want that; he had more than once seen husband and wife growing jealous of the other's success at their own dinner-table. She would not make a commanding position for herself in society, but he did not want that, however much his father may have desired it. . . .

Deryk's thoughts came back with a jerk to his father's letter. He was at least prepared to agree that he ought to marry; a man of his age had to, and with a man in his position it was a duty. . . . He wondered what it would feel like to have children of his own; he did not in the least yearn for them, but it must be a curious sensation, it must make a man feel extraordinarily old all of a sudden . . . But it must be interesting to watch them growing—when they had got over the first horrible years of teethings and measles and slobbery helplessness and noise; interesting to make plans for them, send them to school, talk over what they were going to do . . . What on earth was he going to tell them to do? Was there going to be a dramatic evening when the eldest came of age? Was he going to say, "My boy, I've decided that the time has come to explain things to you. I don't know whether you have any idea how much money you'll be coming in for, when I die; of course, it will be in the hands of trustees. . . ."

The little speech, to be delivered more than twenty years later, was singularly like Sir Aylmer's speech, when he looked across to see if Hatherly approved and then mentioned the size of his own income! In twenty-one years, the capital would have appreciated and grown; grown perhaps out of all control. He could fancy his son stammering, "But—but what d'you do with it?" and himself replying with unaffected gravity, "You will have to answer that question in your time."

In twenty-one years he might, of course, have found an outlet; otherwise it was to confess defeat and to hand on to a mere boy a problem which his father and grandfather had failed to solve. So far they might fairly say that they had not tried, for Sir Aylmer had been a dying man for fifteen years, and there had not been time since his death for anyone else to try. When once he started, when once he had made up his mind *where* to start . . . He must look into figures and see what Ripley Court and the London house would cost him. Thirty thousand? Fifty? He could hardly make a guess, but fifty thousand seemed a gigantic sum for two people and two houses, however prodigal; that would leave another nine hundred and fifty thousand a year—nine hundred and fifty thousand!—and, unless he could get rid of it, there would be the old task of investing the surplus and laying up a bigger burden for the following year . . . It was funny that the only man who could help him refused to lend a hand! Raymond had a plan and boasted of it, but where did it tend? By an expenditure of nine hundred and fifty thousand a year for any number of years a man could indeed make himself a political force, but how was he to use his power? There was no particular amusement in wielding a big party, running a group of papers, even influencing relations between states. It was a power, of course, but the engine of his car represented power; it was unattractive unless a man knew how he wanted to use it, where he wanted to go. . . .

The car stopped suddenly, and he watched his chauffeur getting out to open the lodge gate of Ripley Court. Deryk yawned and looked at his watch, but it had stopped a few minutes after two. As the car glided along the curving sweeps of the drive, he saw the house standing out against the sky-line, first on his right and then on his left. He tried to appreciate his father's feelings when he first saw it, when he drove back to it day after day, when he felt it becoming a part of himself and of something more than himself; once again his mind leapt forward until he began to lead his own son through the long rooms, explaining that it would all be his some day . . . A pride of possession entered his soul for the first time, as he drew up at the side door by the chapel and began feeling for his keys.

After breakfast six hours later he carried a pipe and an armful of papers to his father's study. With the assistance of Phillimore he disposed of them quickly and strolled into Hatherly's office for a chat. The car was not ordered until five in the afternoon, and, on leaving Hatherly, he wandered round the house, appraising the rooms and ending with a call on Mrs. Benson, who flusteredly addressed him as "my dear," apologised and tried to tempt him with food.

"Nothing, really, thanks," he told her. "As I was down here unexpectedly, I thought I'd come in and see how you were. I say, it isn't true that you're talking of leaving, is it?"

Mrs. Benson smoothed her unwrinkled silk apron with deferential hands.

"Well, my dear—I'm sure I beg your pardon, Sir Deryk—we're none of us as young as we once was, and, when your dear father died, I said to Benson, 'Benson,' I said——"

Deryk vaulted on to the table and sat there swinging his legs.

"Were you fond of my father, Mrs. Benson?" he interrupted. "I mean, I should awfully like to know what other people thought of him."

The old woman looked at him cautiously.

"He was a kind gentleman," she said at length. "And a very fair gentleman. He was very fond of you, my dear."

"Were you afraid of him at all?" Deryk asked.

"I always carried out his orders exactly as he gave them," she answered pregnantly. Then, after a pause, "Benson and I decided, when your father died——"

"But I can't run this place without you," he interrupted.

"Why, my dear, you're hardly ever down here; and the place runs itself."

"But if I married? You wouldn't like me to bring a wife home and not have you to shew her round."

The housekeeper's eyes brightened with interest and became suddenly moist.

"Are you truly getting married, my dear? Oh, I'm glad to hear it! I pray God you'll be very happy. No, I shouldn't like not to be here when you bring her home, that I shouldn't. I thank you for telling me."

Deryk jumped down from the table and started towards the door.

"It isn't decided yet," he told her, "but more unlikely things *have* happened."

On his way back to London he unlocked a despatch box and read again his father's last letter. Fanciful and romantic as were many of its leading ideas, he was surprised to find so much imagination. Sir Aylmer might have been wrong-headed; his errors did not lie on the surface. But the letter, even on a second reading, contained no guidance, and it was specific guidance that Deryk wanted.

A note from Yolande was awaiting him when he reached his rooms; she complained that they had hardly exchanged six words the previous evening and begged him to choose a night for dining with her the following week. "I'll see if I can get Dina to come," the letter ended; "she ought to go out more, or she'll begin to mope." Deryk smiled and turned to the next envelope, which was addressed in Raymond's hand-writing. The letter read unexpectedly: "My dear Mrs. Dawson, I am off to Vienna on Friday. Can you lunch with me on Thursday? Say the Ritz at 2:00 p. m. Most sincerely yours, Raymond Stornaway."

"I suppose hers contained a ditto ditto for me," murmured Deryk. "Old Stornaway doesn't mind about his left hand knowing what his right hand's doing. And as a family the Stornaways shew more determination than variety. They've made up their minds that I'm to marry her and they'll go about taking all the credit. Still, if it amuses them——"

He dressed and drove round to the Hans Crescent Hotel, where he had telephoned to say that he would call for Idina. She was awaiting him in the hall with an apology for having only the dress in which he had seen her the previous evening.

"You looked very sweet in it last night," he reassured her. "I'm not sure you don't look sweeter still this evening. How are you? Well?"

She nodded with bright eyes.

"I'm so glad to see you again, Deryk," she whispered. "Where are you taking me to?"

"The Savoy. D'you mind that?"

"I've never been there; I shall love it."

Deryk considered for a moment.

"As a matter of fact I've ordered a private room," he told her. "If you care about seeing people, I'll try to get a table in the restaurant. I thought the other'd be more quiet."

For an instant Idina looked startled; then she coloured slightly.

"Oh, don't alter it," she begged. "I expect we shall have ever so many things to talk about."

As their dinner drew to a close, Deryk asked Idina to marry him. There could have been nothing of the unexpected in his proposal or her acceptance, but she turned her face away and began to cry quietly the moment that she had given him her answer.

"It's because I love you so!" she sobbed, when he knelt beside her, trying to comfort her and fearful that a waiter would inopportunely burst in with a tray of coffee. "Oh, Deryk, I thought I should never be happy again."

He kissed her hurriedly and went back to his place.

"You mustn't let anyone see you crying," he urged in agitation.

She dried her eyes and smiled bravely at him.

"I'm very obedient, aren't I, Deryk?"

"You can't begin too soon," he laughed.

"Oh, my darling, I'll do whatever you tell me to! I'll do anything, anything in the whole world for you."

He stretched out his hand and caught hers.

"Are you really happy, Dina?"

"Oh, wonderfully, wonderfully happy! Do you remember the night of the ball at Ripley Court, the first time you kissed me? I've not been really, really happy since then."

As the waiter served the coffee, Deryk lit a cigar and tried to recover some appearance of collectedness. His sense of perspective was gone, and he took time to appreciate what he had done. Among the memories and thoughts that crowded into his brain, Idina's "Oh, wonderfully, wonderfully happy!" kept recurring like a refrain of sensuous abandonment. The repetition was an engaging trick of emphasis; he loved her for it, trivial as it really was.

and for the surrender of soul which it seemed to proclaim. It was a trick that he well recollected—and then he knew that his memory was at fault. He had learned to know that repetition from the lips of Lucile Welman, when she told him at Maidenhead, months before their final parting, that he was "breaking" her "poor, poor heart—*breaking* it." He remembered the first time that he had noticed her using it; he remembered, too, how tired of it he had grown until in one of their quarrels he had called it a "silly affectation." Then she had cried, and he had apologised—as, in those days, he always did, when she cried. . . .

"Deryk, he's gone now! You can give me one tiny, tiny kiss."

He pushed back his chair and drew her into his arms.

"I wonder how long you'll care for me?" he whispered.

"Oh, Deryk! for ever and ever."

He loosened one arm and smoothed her hair back from her forehead.

"It's an awful thing," he began with a jerky laugh, "but I suppose every man who beats his wife and every wife who runs away from her husband always start like this."

"But, sweetheart, we shan't be like them!"

Deryk sighed.

"I suppose they always say that, too. I'm sorry, Dina child, but sometimes I seem to see life without any of its romance and glamour. And the world's a beastly place then."

"Not our world, darling."

That night, after he had left her at her hotel, Deryk telephoned to Yolande.

"I've got some news for you," he began. "Oh, you'd guessed it already? Well, that saves me the trouble of telling you. Thanks very much indeed. Oh, I hope so. The what? Oh, the best day's work I've ever done. I'll tell her that. You saw it coming? Well, I didn't take *much* trouble to hide it, did I? Good-night. Oh, not at all! I wanted you to know before anyone else. Thank you most awfully."

He hung up the receiver with a feeling of flatness and anti-climax and hunted for Raymond's number in the telephone directory.

"Deryk Lancing speaking. I say, I thought you'd be interested to hear I've just got engaged to Mrs. Dawson. Oh, thanks very much. It's awfully kind of you. Oh, only this evening. I'm afraid I can't quite hear. Oh, you saw it coming. I can't hear. Oh, I shall certainly tell her that. But I shall see you before you leave England. Good-night and many thanks."

He depressed the receiver for a moment to break the connection and then asked for a trunk call to Aston Ripley.

"Hats *can't* very well say he saw it coming," he murmured. "If he does, I'll break the damned thing off."

CHAPTER VII

WHAT COMES OUT IN THE FLESH

"After one week, man came to [Twashtri], and said: Lord, this creature that you have given me makes my life miserable. She chatters incessantly, and teases me beyond endurance, never leaving me alone: and she require incessant attention, and takes all my time up, and cries about nothing, and is always idle; and so I have come to give her back again, as I cannot live with her. So Twashtri said: Very well: and he took her back. Then after another week, man came again to him, and said: Lord, I find that my life is very lonely since I gave you back that creature. I remember how she used to dance and sing to me, and look at me out of the corner of her eye, and play with me, and cling to me; and her laughter was music, and she was beautiful to look at, and soft to touch: so give her back to me again. So Twashtri said: Very well: and gave her back again. Then after only three days, man came back to him again, and said: Lord, I know not how it is; but after all, I have come to the conclusion that she is more of a trouble than a pleasure to me: so please take her back again. But Twashtri said: Out on you! Be off! I will have no more of this. You must manage how you can. Then man said: But I cannot live with her. And Twashtri replied: Neither could you live without her. And he turned his back on man, and went on with his work. Then man said: What is to be done? for I cannot live either with or without her."

F. W. Bain: A Digit of the Moon.

I

The news of Deryk's engagement, starting nowhere in particular and not visibly assisted on its course by anyone in particular, spread through London in a day and the country in a week. Self-centred, but not abnormally self-conscious, Deryk was first of all surprised, then bewildered and finally aghast. He had told Raymond, Yolande and Hatherly between eleven and twelve one evening; while he was still in bed, three illustrated papers begged by telephone to be favoured with photographs of Mrs. Dawson and himself; a bright, pertinacious girl with an air of not being easily deterred by porters, footmen, secretaries or confidential servants interviewed him at length, asking questions for an hour and condensing the results, in a form that made him blush hotly, into two excessively personal paragraphs. Simultaneously a torrent of congratulations descended upon him by telegram, letter, express message and telephone. The following morning, less than thirty-six hours after the engagement, the daily papers were publishing the tidings—not as a paid advertisement or social announcement, but as a matter of public interest, under a leaded title on the main news page with a column of Austro-Servian diplomacy on one side and the Buckingham Palace Conference on the other. The world was informed in every variety of journalistic setting, from a staid "Engagement of Sir Deryk Lancing, Bart." to "England's Richest Bachelor to Wed." He had no idea—he kept saying to himself and sometimes bemusedly to friends who ran him to earth in his rooms or waylaid him at his club—he had no idea that so many people knew of his existence.

For nearly a week he had no time to go near his new house. A shorthand writer, frantically engaged by telephone from an agency, helped him to open and sort the letters, endorsing the congratulations with a common-form reply of thanks telegraphed in sheafs of a hundred at a time. Forgotten acquaintances at Eton and Magdalen, forgotten wayfarers encountered he knew not where, friends of his father, dim personalities whose parties he had unrememberingly attended, all seemed to know him; they seemed to know him as a social duty; perhaps they quietly bragged about it—"Lancing—old Deryk? Oh, Lord yes! he was at m'tutor's. I must congratulate the old man." Since his father's death he had appreciated that Sir Aylmer was well-known, but he fought against the conviction that people who had met him two or three times in a forgotten house-party were remembering him clearly, getting ready their smiles for the next meeting. . . .

The news-cutting agencies had gone to work as promptly as before, and he yielded to the temptation of seeing what was really being said about him. Immediately he found paragraphs which he despaired of tracing to their origin, photographs whose existence he had never suspected. Under the title of "The Camera in Society" he found himself striding through Hyde Park, grinning vacantly in conversation with a man whom he could not recognise, worming his way into Boulter's Lock on Ascot Sunday; the house in Pall Mall was reproduced, Ripley Court was reproduced; with amazement he discovered a group taken when Lord Pebbleridge's hounds met there eighteen months before, with himself patting a horse's withers and talking to the Secretary, while George Oakleigh—an unmistakable George Oakleigh—lounged in the doorway, smoking a cigar. The files had been ransacked, every shred of uninteresting, bald, snob-tickling irrelevancy was dragged out and reproduced: "Mr. Deryk Lancing, who is, of course, the heir of Sir Aylmer Lancing, the well-known millionaire-philanthropist," "Sir Deryk Lancing, who succeeds to the title," "Sir Deryk Lancing and a friend," "Snapped at Maidenhead; Mr. Deryk Lancing." He looked closely and long at a picture of Mrs. Welman lying back in a punt, half-covered with yielding silk cushions, and himself rather inexpertly wielding a pole; then he tore it angrily into small pieces. A moment later he gathered the pieces and burned them with a match, and, as the flame died down, he left his work and hunted in a despatch-box for a packet of letters from her which he could not remember destroying. . . .

"I suppose I never read the papers," he muttered to himself. "Good God! I wonder how much people really *do* know about me!"

The new aspect of himself fascinated him morbidly. There were letters from traditional, family friends whom he had dropped because they bored him: "Dear Sir Deryk, (as I suppose I must call you now), though we have seen so little of you in recent years. . . ." He smiled cynically at the pathetically transparent attempt to retain or recapture him. The mothers of several girls whom Sir Aylmer was always inviting to Ripley Court were "so much interested in the news of your engagement"; two of the girls themselves were "simply dying to meet your wife," and one shy little note offered all congratulations and good wishes with an unblushing frankness that disconcerted him; "you don't remember me, but the times I went to Ripley Court are very happy memories, and anything that makes for your happiness has my blessing." Deryk tortured his brain to remember the handwriting, the name, anything about the woman. Apparently he had attracted her—some shy girl to whom he had been civil—and she was honest enough to be unreserved about it. He wondered how many others had worshipped him or his setting from a distance.

"I can't remember paying any sort of attention to anyone bar Dina. I suppose some of them think I treated them badly, or their mothers think I raised 'expectations,' or some rot of that kind. I bet they said it, too. I suppose if I ever danced with a girl through half the evening—those damned chaperons have got nothing else to think about . . . Why can't people leave me alone?"

As the letters and news-cuttings accumulated, he began to marvel that the world had left him alone so much as it had. He was a public interest, an engrossing speculation, and, except when a friend jocosely called him a plutocrat, he had imagined that other people were as unconscious of his wealth as he was; the suspicion, which his father had presented to him and which he had refused to entertain, that anyone of any age or sex sought his society because he was a millionaire's son, set his lip curling. If that had been their first and abiding conception of him, at least they had decently veiled their interest. But the world had left him alone more than some people would say that he deserved. The eternal question what he was going to do with his life and his money was indirectly asked in numberless inaccurate suppositions. He read, as he now remembered reading when his father died, that "the new baronet is as keenly interested as was his father in all social questions. It is an open secret that he has studied them at first-hand . . ." "That's George Oakleigh, I suppose," Deryk commented. Gossipy "Chats about People" revealed the further open secret that the new Baronet was preparing a political career; "a constituency in the Midlands has been mentioned . . . "; he learnt for the first time that he was interested in diplomacy and that at the time of his father's death he was proposing to proceed to Constantinople as an Honorary Attaché; only Sir Aylmer's failing health had kept him in England. He was likely, too, to find his time almost entirely absorbed by the control of the vast financial interests which he had inherited. Alternatively, he was an enthusiastic antiquarian; while at Oxford, where he had a most distinguished academic career, and every year since, he had spent many months with Dr. Manisty, the well-known Hellenist, excavating the remains of Troy.

"Poor Felix!" laughed Deryk. "They'll call it Herculaneum next and say that I discovered it. I must be rather a disappointment to these good people!"

He ceased to laugh as the new picture formed itself in his mind. A man had a right to grow cynical, impatient, resentful, when he was regarded as the prize in a matrimonial lottery open to all-comers; he was only seen as a speculation, however, by people who did not count. A larger and more sober body of critics looked upon him as a man charged with a trust and a mission. They were tolerant; so far as the money was concerned, they were content with his signing banker's orders for all his father's charities; but there was an inferential criticism in their curiosity about him. They expected him to do something serious, devoted and heroic with his unique position; they hinted that there were few things that a man in his position could not do and then inventoried his attainments and experience to drive the hint home. . . .

"If *they'd* suggest anything!" he exclaimed impatiently. "I'm not going to waste my life tramping backwards and forwards to a division lobby on some rotten Plural Voting Bill. Besides, anyone can do that, and they keep billing me for a star turn of some kind."

He carried his impatience out to lunch with him, summarily charging the shorthand-writer to open all letters and telegrams, burn all circulars, catalogues and other communications dealing with plate, jewellery, furs, furniture, houses in town and country and insurance proposals and to reply by wire to all further congratulations.

"I suppose the whole racket will start again when people begin sending me wedding presents," he grumbled to Idina, after describing the morning's work. "Can't we put a stopper on that by saying we don't want any? It *is* rather ridiculous for twenty-five different people to send me twenty-five perfectly superfluous cigarette-boxes; if I want one, they know perfectly well that I can afford to buy it. As a matter of fact, I *don't;* I imagine I've got everything in the world that a man could have." A sudden wistfulness came into his eyes. "You're in the same boat now, Dina, and I hope you'll like it more than I do. I don't feel I shall ever get a new thrill, I've—I've *had* everything and *been* everywhere and *met* everybody."

Idina looked at him with a reproachfulness which she tried to pretend was affected.

"That's *not* very complimentary to me, darling!" she protested.

"I was thinking of the last time we lunched together," he answered slowly. "Do you remember coming up from the country? Well, then I *did* have to think a good many times before I ordered myself a liqueur with my coffee—as a matter of fact, I knocked off coffee, cigars, everything of that kind, the day I left home. It was much more fun, you know, when you *did* stand yourself a treat. But, getting back, can't we advertise to people that we don't want their beastly presents?"

Idina's mind retained a vivid picture of her first marriage, unheralded, unblessed, without one dear, fatuous wedding-expert to crack absurd jokes, to make tender, whispered speeches and, perhaps, to grow suddenly silent and misty-eyed. . . .

"People pretend to be very blasé about weddings," she said, "but as a matter of fact they like them. They like choosing presents and giving them; I don't think they'd care to be told their presents weren't wanted."

"But we're in rather a different position. We *don't* want to be flooded with tea-knives and thermos flasks." Idina thought well to make no answer, and he followed out his own thoughts. "I don't understand about weddings. I wouldn't go to one of my own free will, if you paid me to, but, whenever I have to put in an appearance, I see crowds of girls with their eyes bulging out of their heads and dear old boys and their wives simply working themselves up to cry at the right moment. It can't be the champagne, because that's always undrinkable, and it's depraved to drink champagne at three o'clock in the afternoon. I suppose, when people get married, it's the most glorious moment of their lives; and the girls go, because they hope their turn's coming, and the old people, because they like to be reminded of the possibilities of life as they saw them before they became disillusionised."

Idina thought of married life, as she had known it for eight months. For Deryk, who had no excuse for disillusion, to talk like that seemed to drive a knife into her and twist it in the wound.

"People needn't be disillusionised always, need they?" she suggested timidly.

Deryk shrugged his shoulders and began to cut up the meat on his plate.

"The honeymoon ecstasy doesn't seem to last much beyond the honeymoon," he opined. "I suppose, when the froth's been blown away and you come to grips, when you realise the extraordinary *permanence* of marriage, when all the little mannerisms that you hardly noticed before, because you were so infatuated, or that you may have noticed and rather liked, when they begin to get on your nerves——"

Idina leant across the table and laid her hand on his wrist, looking at him with a strained smile.

"I suppose it is really, really best to think of all this before it's too late?" she asked.

"My dear, you'll find that I'm anything but easy to get on with when you see me all day and every day. I've got no illusions about myself. I know myself rather well; I'm nervy, selfish——"

Idina shook her head at him, and her eyes softened.

"Not selfish, darling. Or else you must know yourself better than I know you. Just the least little bit obstinate, the least little bit wilful, but wonderfully, wonderfully generous." She paused abruptly and stared at her plate until her voice was grown steady again. "I never thought anybody *could* be so generous until—that night. We bumped into each other and began speaking like machines, but, when I had time to—to appreciate, I *expected* you to hit me in the face, I *expected* it. And I shouldn't have blamed you. You see,—I knew everything, I'd met Yolande in Vienna and I knew what you thought of me. I felt like a dog waiting to be beaten."

Deryk laughed self-consciously.

"I don't know that I'm much given to hitting women in the face," he said. The words, on reflection, seemed well chosen; there had been moments of exasperation in his life with Lucile Welman, when he felt restrained from nothing except physical violence. A dozen times, as he tried to burst away from her and she begged him with her practised, professional tear in the voice not to break her heart, he had stood trembling and setting together exquisitely selected words from a vocabulary of a sudden enriched, picturing their effect and exulting in her imagined, moaning collapse. Somewhere within him he felt a sinister, volcanic force of cruelty, to be released whenever his unstable grip on his own plunging nerves relaxed. But he had never yet, literally or metaphorically, hit a woman in the face. "And I—by the way, I'm never going to touch on this subject again—it may be vanity, but, knowing you as long and as well as I did, I never thought you'd chucked me aside to marry *him* for the fun of the thing."

Idina lowered her eyes again.

"We won't talk about this," she said. "But I will just say that I was really, really out of my mind that night, and you behaved like"—she hesitated for a word—"like a gentleman. You're very, very chivalrous, Deryk dear; you always have been. You can look a woman in the eyes——"

"I shouldn't call *that* much of a test," he interrupted swiftly and with obvious distaste for the turn the conversation was taking.

"Ah, but I know! You've always, always been the soul of chivalry——"

"I've always, always had every, every kind of virtue," he interrupted again. Her trick of repetition was irritating, and he hoped to laugh her out of it; otherwise it was difficult to see how she was to be broken of the habit.

"I'll promise not to flatter you, if you'll promise not to run yourself down," she proposed. "I don't say you're perfect; I'm afraid I'm not fit to marry anyone who's perfect, but you're very, very magnanimous."

Deryk gave an irrepressible shiver and forced her attention back to their wedding arrangements. The marriage was to take place as soon as a year had elapsed from Sidney's death.

"You don't want to make a fashionable circus of it?" he asked disparagingly.

"I'll do whatever you like, darling."

"Oh, I vote for no presents, no advertisement, no ceremony in church—just shove a notice in the '*Times*' to warn people that we're married and then go to Ripley Court for our honeymoon. It'll be far more comfortable than a verminous hotel in Rome or any of the usual places." Idina was silent for so long that his conscience grew uneasy. "You think that'll be a bit flat?" he suggested more kindly. "Well, it's for you to decide. If you want a show——"

"Oh, I don't want a 'show,' as you call it," she protested. "I'll—I'll do anything you like."

"But what d'you want to do?"

A quaver came into her voice, as she tried to answer.

"I suppose I'm like other people," she said. "I want it to be the most glorious moment of our lives."

Deryk smiled indulgently and began to talk about their engagements for the coming week. Idina had grown very sentimental of late—or he was beginning to take a worldly, common-sense view of life. But she was eminently tractable; too tractable, perhaps; life would be intolerable, if she met every proposal, damned the flow of any discussion with an automatic "I'll do whatever you like." For companionship and sympathy a man might as well live with a gramaphone.

"It *shall* be—*the* most glorious," he assented. "There's no hurry yet awhile, but you say exactly what you want done, and it shall be arranged."

When luncheon was over, he hurried home and telephoned for his car to take him to Aston Ripley. Hatherly was there, immersed in business and clamouring for his presence; as he could not avoid the interview longer, he was at least resolved to make one do duty for two and to discuss the draft of his new will. For six months Raymond Stornaway had been heir to the estate, and Deryk had now to arrange for Idina to be the beneficiary and for a rigorous trust to be established. It must all be strangely similar to what his father had done six and twenty years before; in all probability the original instrument, with trifling modifications, could be used again—like causes producing like effects and demanding like precautions. In another twenty-six years another young Lancing might well be found scowling on the hearth-rug and demanding his rights. The new trust would have to be erected, of course, but it was an ironic commentary if trust succeeded trust and the beneficiaries found no way of even planing the edges of the estate. . . .

He remembered that he had not discussed with Idina the thoughts that had passed through his mind after reading his morning batch of news-cuttings. Something would really have to be done. To begin with, as a married man he would find his liberty much curtailed. Whether his wife had a family or not, he would no longer be able to dash off for a couple of months to Asia Minor, a couple of years elsewhere; his life henceforth would be anchored to England; with every day that passed it would tend more and more to become a middle-aged routine—breakfast, the letters and papers, luncheon, a blank until dinner, a blank after dinner (they could not dine out, give parties or go to a theatre *every* night), bed, breakfast, the letters and papers. . . .

"You've got mighty little to say for yourself," commented Hatherly that evening, when Deryk had eaten three courses in unbroken silence.

"I was thinking how grateful I should be to anyone who suggested something that I've never done before."

"Well, you've never been married before."

"I wonder if marriage *does* make all the difference that people pretend. Oh! it's no use your talking, Hats; you're a bachelor, too."

2

When Deryk returned to town, he was surprised to hear that Idina had left suddenly for the country. "London is getting so hot," she wrote in explanation, "but I will come back whenever you want me. I'm afraid your visit to Ripley Court was too short to do you much good; and I'm sure you want a little bit of a holiday. You seemed so tired and nervous at lunch. . . ."

He had arrived in London at noon with a vista of appointments before him, but, on receiving her note, he turned the car's head and pursued her to the south coast, filled with penitence and irritation at feeling penitent. He was neither nervous nor tired, and all that she meant was that she had not enjoyed the luncheon; assuredly it was not his lucky meal, they always started with a general discussion, which invariably became stripped of everything but its personal application. He remembered a furtive meal which he had given her fifteen months before, when she very sweetly and quite recklessly urged him to marry her at once and—well—trust to luck with his father; he had explained that he was fighting his father on the principle of financial independence and that she was only a peg, a text, a *casus belli;* if she were dead and buried, he would have to go on fighting just the same. For some reason she never forgot or forgave his perfectly innocent remark; it was dragged up and thrown back at him on at least three occasions that he could remember . . . And now, apparently, he had put his foot into it again; Idina had winced and bitten her lip when he said—for the life of him he could not remember what he *had* said; it was something about a quiet wedding . . . He must go and kiss the tears away, he supposed, but she really (or really, *really*) must try to keep conversation impersonal. Otherwise it became impossible. . . .

He arrived at the fishing village of Pensington at seven o'clock on a mid-July evening, at a moment of sensible stillness when the drowsy heat of the day hung between the cottages of the single street, over the dilapidated jetty and shingle-clad beach, waiting and panting for a sea-breeze to arise and blow cool air through the haze of somnolence. The narrow street checked his long, low-bodied car, and he went on foot through a hundred yards of dusty unevenness, enquiring the way of every slow-speaking loiterer, until a sudden turn bared the sea to his eyes, and he caught sight of a figure in a white dress and long, chamois gardening-gloves vanishing and reappearing behind a dense, eight-foot hedge.

He paused to look through a spy-hole between two bushes and whispered above the finality of her scissors' "clip-clip-*clip,*" "Dee-eena!" She started at the second repetition, but from her side the hedge was impenetrable, and he had to run round to the crazy gate. Idina stood motionless, watching his impatient fumblings with the broken latch; then she plucked off her gloves and hurried forward to welcome him with bare arms outstretched.

"My darling, I never expected to see you!"

The plaintive hunger in her voice made him bend down and redouble his concentration on the rusty hasp.

"Are you *glad* to see me?" he asked, looking up with a smile and collecting himself before coming in to the garden.

"You know I am, Deryk, but there's nothing wrong, is there?"

He laughed to share and appreciate her pleasure.

"I don't know whether it's wrong for me to want to see you," he said. "That's the only reason I came here at a time when I'm run off my legs in London. This strikes me as an agreeably restful spot, Dina. Have you got any food in the house, and is there an inn or any place where I can get a reasonably clean bed? Two beds would be useful, because I've got the shuvver here."

Her surprise and delight prevented her doing anything but follow him with her eyes, as he sauntered with over-elaborate ease round the garden or stood staring up at the honey-coloured thatch and half-timber of her cottage.

"The 'Fisherman's Arms'," she began at length uncertainly. "Dearest, how long are you going to stay here?"

"How long would you like me?" he asked in turn. "I haven't got so much as a razor or tooth-brush."

"As if that mattered!"

He turned suddenly and caught her by the wrists, raising her hands to his lips and kissing the palms. "Sweetheart, they're all earthy!" Idina protested feebly. For answer he kissed them again and slipped his arm round her waist.

"Are you glad to see me?" he whispered again. "I oughtn't to be here and I can't stay, but I thought I must come down for a few hours. Our lunch wasn't much of a success the other day, I was in one of my clear-sighted, analytical moods, which I suppose must always seem rather unsympathetic to other people. Say you forgive me, Dina."

She drew down his head to a level with her own, and her warm breath struck softly on his ear.

"Darling, darling Deryk! you know I don't mind what you say or do as long as I'm with you. You can play King John and the Jews, if you like, and pull out my teeth one by one—for every hour you stay here! Only I'm afraid you wouldn't love me any longer, if I weren't pretty."

Deryk disengaged his arm and turned her head until he could look squarely into her face.

"You're wonderfully beautiful, child," he said slowly, as though he were making the discovery for the first time. "You're so dainty and young and innocent, you've never grown up, you're like a girl in a convent, with large, enquiring eyes and a little wistful dimple of a mouth . . . I'm not wholly bad and assuredly I'm not wholly good, but, if I were a sort of Galahad, I should adore you like a Madonna—and, if I were a bit worse than I am, I think I should never be satisfied till I'd broken you, spoiled you, made you as vile as I should be." He paused at the startled, uncomprehending look in her eyes. "You don't understand, Dina; there's a lot of things you don't understand. When you—well, let's say, before I met you again—I went off the rails pretty considerably. For two, three—I don't know how many months it was, I tried to forget——"

Idina threw her arms round him.

"Go on forgetting, sweetheart," she gently urged. "I don't want to hear, I shouldn't believe you, if you told me. To me you'll always be brave, beautiful, generous—oh, it's true, darling, it's true, even if you don't like me to tell you."

Deryk had broken from her embrace and was idly picking dead blooms off a standard rose-tree. Being in love was an exquisite illusion, no doubt, but it should always be regarded as an illusion; a drunken man should never be so drunk as not to know that he was drunk. With genuine, wistful concern he tried to imagine what kind of awakening lay ahead of Idina, if she tried to keep him on his present pinnacle; she would discover that they thought differently on a thousand subjects, that, however good or bad his case, he could beat her by skill of dialectic or massed array of information; and he could not stand much graceful surrender or many repetitions of "Yes, darling, you're always right" or "Nothing matters so long as you love me." That sort of thing palled and cloyed. And, however much he loved her, he would be like other husbands in broad outline; there was no blinking the certainty that, when the honeymoon phase was ended, they would occasionally irritate each other—like any other husband and wife,—there might be petulant words, as they tried to rub off their angularity. Was she going to say, like people on the stage, "You've ceased to love me?"

Her hands stole timidly round his shoulders again.

"Sweetheart, I've said something to upset you! You're not angry with me?"

Deryk found his voice hard to control.

"My beloved child, why should I be angry with you? I suppose I had another of my desolating flashes of second-sight . . . What pitiful fools we are in this world! Do we *really* think that all eternity will be like this moment"—he swept his arm agitatedly round—"roses, and a smell of honey-suckle, and an orange-coloured sun, and just a hint of the sea murmuring in the distance to remind us that the world is not standing still? Do we really——?"

"Really, really!" she interrupted in a tremulous whisper. "I couldn't bear it, if I didn't!"

Deryk looked compassionately into her upturned face and kissed her forehead.

"This is all very well," he said with a short laugh, "but I'm not going to sleep under a hedge, and, if I don't find a room somewhere, there'll be trouble."

They dined that night by moonlight, sitting on the tiny lawn in front of the cottage, silent or stilted as long as Idina's country-bred cook was bustling importantly to and fro with newly caught soles, grilled ham and home-made cheese. Deryk drank cider out of a dented pewter tankard and, when dinner was over, threw himself on to the crumbling, warm earth and lazily filled a pipe. A film of dusk had spread over the garden with the dropping of the daylight, and the sea, changed from its afternoon blue to the likeness of molten lead, seemed banked up and hesitating, as the tide waited for its signal to turn. Overhead the low-circling bats passed and repassed with a whirring beat of wing; all else was silent, and Idina was afraid to violate it. She wanted to tell him how his ruthless commonsense the previous day had hurt her—in order that she might tell him that the wound was healed by his sweet, unexpected appearance. His love for her took so much for granted and had itself to be so much taken for granted; with his ignorance of women and self-conscious contempt for sentiment, he never understood through how many moods a woman could pass, how quickly the moods changed; nor, until that night, had he shewn himself conscious of the meaning to a woman of a timely, meaningless endearment or caress. His power of fierce pity and obstinate love was checked by fear of seeming weakness, as though he dreaded advantage being taken of an open lapse into natural tenderness. His kindliness was as Procrustean as his father's; she wondered apprehensively whether the lapses would grow more and more infrequent until he took on the inexorable sternness which she had once seen on Sir Aylmer's face in the chapel of Ripley Court.

"I feel as if I could stay here all my life," Deryk drawled lazily between grateful, slow draws at his pipe.

Idina dropped on her knees behind him and lifted his head into her lap.

"Why don't you, darling?" she asked.

"A bit cramped, I'm afraid."

"We should be nice and near together," she laughed; then, with whimsical seriousness, "Mr. Stornaway sold my house in Sussex and got rid of the lease of the one in London. I was going to live here; then, when you asked me to marry you, I made up my mind to sell this, too, though I'd only had it for a few weeks. I don't think I *shall* sell it now, Deryk; I shall keep it to remind me of the beautiful present you made me by coming here to-day. And, if ever we get tired of living in big houses or if we feel that people are swarming round us and forcing us apart, we'll come down here for a month or a week or a day, even, and recapture all the magic, all the scent and warmth . . . Deryk dear, have you ever wanted to cry just because you were so happy that you didn't feel you could bear any more? Before I married—*just* before, you know—I thought I should never be happy again; something seemed to have been killed in me. Perhaps you don't know that I'm very vain and I used to spend, oh! infinite time and trouble trying to make my hair look nice and trying to keep my hands soft and white. It wasn't all for myself; I wanted to please you, I've always wanted to please you. Once, when you came home from school and told me I'd got skinny legs, I locked myself up with a medical dictionary of father's and solemnly took to gorging myself on cream and suet puddings in the hope of getting fat . . . Dear Deryk! if you only knew how proud you made me one Christmas by looking me slowly up and down and telling me that I was wearing "*quite* a decent dress!" The next three dresses were exactly the same, and you nearly broke my heart at the end of your first term at Oxford, when you thought you really knew something about girls' dresses and told me that pink didn't suit me and I must never wear pink again. I *did* want to please you so badly, but, when I thought you'd given up caring for me, I simply didn't mind what happened to me; it was nothing but habit that made me do my hair or put my hat on right way round. Did you bother to see what I was wearing on the night when we met at Yolande's? Ah, you're not very observant even now, dear, but Yolande took me on one side and bullied me and said I looked a fright and that she wouldn't go on knowing me, if I didn't take some pride in my appearance. I hardly dared to come to the Carlton with you, but I have taken some pride in myself since that. I'm afraid it wasn't for dear Yolande's sake, though. Something came to life again inside me." She stopped with a break in her voice and bent down to kiss his half-closed eyelids. "Sweetheart, I do so want to cry; and you'll hate me, if I do."

Deryk stretched one hand backwards over his head and caught her fingers in his own. "Go on talking instead," he suggested. "I like listening, and you make love so much better than I should."

"*Make* love? Ah, dear, I'm talking like this because I can't help it, because my love for you is overflowing, because my heart's not large enough to hold it all. I *am* worth coming eighty miles to see, aren't I? And you won't go back just yet? I'll take the most wonderful care of you, if you'll stay; we shall bathe and sit drying in the sun all day, and at night you shall come here under the moon and sleep on the warm earth with my breast as a pillow. And I'll watch over you and send you sweet dreams and pray for you, oh! and thank God for you, Deryk! My darling, why need you ever go away again?"

The long-awaited sea-breeze was blowing in with gusty puffs, diluting and dispersing the bank of warmth that had been accumulating all day. Deryk shivered involuntarily all through his body.

" 'Fraid your scheme rather leaves out the English climate," he commented. "My dear, I'm getting cold and I'm sure we both ought to be in bed. What's the time?"

Idina looked at the watch on his wrist for the sake of an excuse to kiss his hand.

"Dear, it's only ten. You *never* go to bed at ten."

"I shall to-night."

"Your one night with me? Ah, darling, don't get up! Stay where you are for just five minutes, because I ask you to!"

Deryk had struggled stiffly to his feet, but she knelt upright and clasped her arms round his knees, drawing him to her and begging him in whispers not to go. He tried to disengage her hands without hurting her, laughing and making game of her efforts that he might not allow a strain of irritation to appear. One could rather overdo this love-making; he was tired, his mood had broken, and in rapidly strengthening reaction he felt that the whole evening had been childish; that, however, could not be altered, though it might be avoided; but he was going to bed now. He had said it; he could hardly imagine a power strong enough to detain him; certainly he could never begin doing or not doing things "because I ask you to"; there was no end to that, and the appetite would grow with the eating. . . .

Her hands dropped with reproachful limpness to her sides. Attitude and expression teased Deryk's irritated nerves and made him feel that she was behaving like a child.

"Well, I must go to bed," he told her abruptly, trying afterwards to cloak the harshness of his tone with a parade of stretching and yawning.

"Are you going to bathe to-morrow?" she asked. "The sea's lovely in the morning. You could call for me on your way down; I usually go at about eight."

He took ample time to consider, as he filled his final pipe.

"I'll come, if I can get anything to wear," he answered, patting her cheek. "Good-night, Dina. You see that I can't keep away from you for very long."

"My darling, I never want you to be away from me at all!"

Deryk slept that night in a white-washed attic with waves of lavender blowing through the casements and a sound of scampering mice behind the wainscoting. He awoke to find the sun shining on to his face and the room full of the drowsy hum of bees from the garden below. Idina was awaiting him on her lawn in blue peignoir, bathing costume and cap, with blue sandals laced criss-cross to the knees; the night's rest in the fragrant air had stilled the dancing of his nerves; he gave her twenty yards' start, and they raced, laughing and shouting, down the cliff path and a hundred yards through the creaming surf until he overtook her and bent her head back to receive his kiss. She looked more a child than ever with the wet gown clinging to her slender body and her eyes gleaming with happiness and joy of existence in the sunshine.

"Did you sleep well, sweetheart?" she panted. "You ought to have, because you kept me waiting an hour."

"If I'd known what you were going to look like, I'd have turned up considerably earlier," he answered with boisterous good-humour.

Idina sat down in two feet of water with arms outstretched, rising and sinking with the rhythmic undulation of the waves.

"You're not going back, are you, Deryk?" she coaxed. "I should like our life to be always like this."

"I've got work to do, my child," he reminded her.

"But, dearest, you're so rich, you can pay some one to do your work for you."

He shook his head and dropped on to his knees, scooping up water and splashing it over his face and hair with both hands.

"That's the trouble, Dina. I'm so beastly rich that I shall have to work all my life. It's expected of me. I shall be one of the busiest men in London when I get started—a younger edition of Raymond Stornaway."

Her face lengthened with disappointment.

"But I shall never see you," she pouted.

"Perhaps you'll see too much of me, when we're married."

She caught his hand and kissed it, preliminarily plucking away a strand of sea-weed and mischievously tossing it at him.

"I couldn't do that, sweetheart," she said. "I want to be with you every hour of the day, I want to kiss you asleep at night and kiss you awake in the morning; all the rest of the time I want to sit with my arms around your neck, looking at you and listening to you and thanking God for you."

Deryk withdrew his hand and began to splash his way further out to sea.

"This is too shallow for me," he called back. "You have to wade a mile before the water comes up to your waist."

Idina started to follow him and then abruptly stopped. A hardening in his voice, only perceptible when she stopped to reflect upon it, warned her that she had struck a false note. She splashed industriously in the surf for a few moments, with furtive, sideways glances at his bobbing head; then she began to wade inshore, calling over her shoulder that she was beginning to grow cold. She had returned to her cottage, dressed and finished brushing her hair before Deryk appeared, languid, damp-haired and ravenous, to demand tobacco, food and drink. She waited upon him silently until he rose with a sigh and walked out into the garden; then she slipped her arm through his and strolled into the sunshine and towards the bed of parched turf where he had lain overnight.

"When d'you get your morning papers?" he asked, as he filled a pipe.

"Not till to-night, I'm afraid," Idina answered, as she began to pick off the battered, dead rose-blossoms. "There's no proper delivery, so I have them posted down. Is there anything you want to see? I find them so dull that I never mind, if they don't come."

Deryk looked at her with an expression of surprise.

"But what do you do all the morning?" he asked. "You can't pick off dead blossoms *all* day."

She laughed and brushed a clinging petal from her hands.

"I can and do, but I won't to-day. While you're here, I only want to be with you; and, when you're away, I like to wander in and out among the rose-trees, thinking how wonderfully peaceful it all is after what I've gone through; thinking, too, how divinely happy I am." She caught hold of his wrists and looked beguilingly into his eyes. "Say you like being in love with me, darling!"

Deryk removed his pipe and industriously repacked the tobacco.

"I should have thought that went without saying," he laughed. "I'm afraid I'm not very demonstrative, but I haven't got it in me, I'm not built that way, it all seems such rot to me. I'm afraid I'm not much good at making love, Dina."

"Would you like me to teach you?" she asked.

He shook his head wistfully.

"Perhaps I'm too old to learn. Have you got the time on you, dear? Because I've got to get up to town by lunch-time."

Idina looked crushed with disappointment.

"But you're not going to-day, darling?"

"I'm afraid I must," he answered gravely.

"But why?"

Deryk hesitated.

"I've got to see my—architect," he said at length.

3

Idina controlled her disappointment for a time, but, when eleven o'clock struck and the car backed cautiously down the street to her gate, her eyes filled with tears.

"Deryk,—one moment before you go,—just one!" she begged, as he scrambled to his feet without any want of alacrity and set out in search of his hat. "There's one thing I want to say to you——"

He looked at her with surprise, as she hesitated.

"Well?"

"It's just this," she explained with forced detachment, playing with a button of his coat. "If you ever feel you've made—a mistake, I want you to tell me. I shan't reproach you, darling; I'll say good-bye and—and—forget all about you. If you ever thought you'd got me *tied* to you always and always. . . . I don't want you to marry me unless you feel that you simply can't live without me. *Do* you feel that, Deryk?"

"Should I have come down here, if I hadn't?" he asked indulgently, as he took her in his arms and kissed her good-bye.

She smiled in sudden ecstasy, but the joy died out of her eyes as quickly as it had been born.

"You're going away again so soon! I should like you simply not to be *able* to go away."

"I'm afraid the world would come to a standstill on that principle," he laughed.

"Bother the old world!" she cried. "Who cares? But, Deryk, if you ever *do* feel——"

He smothered her halting sentence with another kiss.

"You're talking a great deal of rot, young woman! R. O. T., rot. Don't do it again, but just tell me when I shall see you in town."

"Whenever you want me, dearest."

He pulled a note-book out of his pocket and turned the pages.

"Well, you and the Manistys are lunching with me the first Tuesday in August. I shall see you then. Do you remember where you put my coat?"

Idina's eyes followed him slowly and hopelessly, as he bustled into the cottage.

"It's on the window-seat," she called out. "I shall see you then."

Deryk motored comfortably back to London with an ungrudging sense that his time had been well spent. His private business, the work on his new house were proportionately neglected, but a man in love was not a free agent. He had given poor Idina unbounded pleasure by his visit, the memory of their ill-starred luncheon-party was effaced; now he had several clear days for work without fear of interruption or need to play a part. They were going to be very hard days, for he did not want to spend August in London and, unless he got the alterations well advanced before going away, he knew that nothing would be done until his return. The house *must* be finished; the men were incredibly, intolerably slow; he wanted to see it as he had once dreamed of it at three o'clock in the morning, when he pushed away the plans, tilted back his chair and suddenly caught a glimpse of perfect proportions and ideal colours . . . Moving in would be rare fun; playing with his new toy. And afterwards? . . .

He wondered what Idina would do, what she *really* did with herself all day at Pensington. It must be wonderful to be *able* to live that Arcadian life, to sleep and bathe and wander about a garden and eat primitive food; he had enjoyed every moment of it as a holiday, but then he had come there tired to the marrow of his bones, and it had been heavenly weather. . . .

"I couldn't have stood a second night, though," he told himself. "The fact is, I'm a devilish poor lover, I'm not cut out for it; the conventional technique simply makes me feel a fool. Dina thinks she wants petting and calling by absurd names now, she's awfully hurt if I don't play up at any time, but when once we're married——"

Her parting prayer returned to his memory. If he had made a mistake, he was to get out of it as soon as possible, and she would not reproach him, she would not spoil his life. . . . It was all rather—what word could he use?—*literary;* if he were trying to describe the vicissitudes of love in book or play, there would of necessity be their little scene of that morning—her moment's uncertainty of him, the resolution to restore him his freedom at all costs, the promise to forget him, the smile through her tears. . . . It was charming, but rather absurd. It would hurt her like sin, she would *not* be able to forget him; if he ever accepted her invitation and said he had ceased to love her, if he betrayed it without saying a word to her, he would be committing murder as surely as if he deliberately strangled her. She was that sort; and she had been through so much unhappiness and was so happy now that the result was never in doubt. If he *did* get tired of her in the next four months, if he became convinced that they had made a hideous mistake and were preparing a married life that would be a nightmare, still he would be bound to go through with it—unless he bribed a doctor to diagnose galloping consumption (and he was not good enough actor for the parting scene), or had a shooting accident (which was so likely to overtake a man who never shot!) or tumbled under a train on the Underground (but, to begin with, that was an unpleasant end and required nerve; in the second place it would not deceive a child; the unexplained death of a man engaged to be married was almost invariably suicide, almost invariably occasioned by the engagement. He would have to be more artistic, he would have to take rather more trouble than that. . . .

Deryk started and sat upright in his corner. It was a fool's game to admit that such a thing as suicide existed, to talk about it, to think about it— You simply got morbid and, one day, you did yourself in; and your friends gave evidence and told the coroner that you had been talking about suicide a great deal and seemed "depressed," and the jury returned the usual "while-of-unsound-mind" verdict to spare the feelings of your relations (thank Heaven! he hadn't any) and get you Christian burial. As a matter of interest, he wondered whether a man of sound mind could deliberately wrench soul from body and take his own life, whether he could overcome that amazing tenacity of existence, whether you really had to be off your head before you could lose sight of everything else and concentrate on the one reflection that life was not worth living and that the only way of ending your misery was to end your life. . . .

"This, again, is morbid," he told himself.

She only wanted him to marry her when he felt that he could not live without her. . . . That was really absurd. If *she* had the shooting accident or got drowned bathing, he would not shut himself up and die; it would be a terrible shock, a dreadful loss, but he would continue to live. She seemed ten years younger than he in her romantic conceptions. In marriage, the first thing to decide was whether you could share your life with *anyone,* then who was best suited for an amazingly intimate, incredibly permanent joint existence. If he could bear to live with anyone more than a few weeks, he could bear to live with Idina; he would sooner have her with him in the car at that moment—at all times, indeed, when he was not working; of course, she *did* rather look on life as a musical comedy with moon-light effects, a recitative duet breaking into a waltz-song, gyrations up and down stairs and a sugary over-emphasis of sentiment and stage passion. Poor Dina! He put his feet up on the seat opposite and began to write a pencil note on a sheet torn from his pocket-book. "Great fun, dear, wasn't it? I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. Look here, it's a long time before our lunch-party; why don't you suggest a night for coming up and dining? I'm writing in the car; hence this filthy scrawl."

"She'll like that," he prophesied, as the car slowed down on entering the south-west suburbs.

He reached his rooms to find the shorthand-writer industriously ripping open envelopes and filling in names and addresses on a pad of telegraph forms.

"Oh, Lord! I hoped somehow to find the rot would stop, if I went away," he exclaimed. "I suppose there's nothing of any interest?"

"They're all—very much the same, Sir Deryk," the girl answered. "This telegram has just come in from Mrs. Dawson."

He took it and read, "Trust you arrived safely."

"Oh, tell her I have, will you?" he said, tossing the telegram on to the table. The girl picked it up, as though she expected him to be a little less off-hand in his reply. "As a matter of fact, I have sent her a line already," he explained almost apologetically, wondering the next moment why he troubled to excuse himself to an unknown, subdued-looking girl who existed at that moment to type his letters and send off his telegrams at two guineas a week—thereafter to fade out of his life.

"A great many people have called or rung you up," she told him. "I said I did not know where you were."

"Go on saying that," Deryk begged her. "If you want me for anything urgent, I shall be at the new house, but I don't want people to run me to earth there. Make an exception for Jonas, my architect, if he turns up, but no one else."

He spent a happy half day, planning and ordering in the new house, and only left at nine o'clock in time to snatch a hurried meal at the Eclectic Club. He had meant to dine alone, but George Oakleigh, also a late-comer, sent a waiter to his table with the suggestion that they should join forces. Deryk felt that he owed him too much to yield to his first impulse of refusal.

"Just good wishes," said Oakleigh, putting down his paper and extending a hand of welcome. "You must be sick to death of the subject, so I won't ask a single question. The *sole amiral* is rather good, but I can't recommend the lamb."

"Thanks—for the good wishes and the advice," Deryk laughed. "If you haven't ordered anything to drink, will you help me with a bottle of the '04 Bollinger? I don't believe there's a great lot left!"

As ever he felt at his ease with Oakleigh. The air of kindly disillusion, the shy sympathy, the real, subterranean friendship inspired confidence; they had established an alliance of soul at their first encounter, when with feelings of equal boredom they had assisted at the Ripley Court meet of Lord Pebbleridge's hounds.

"How much longer are you staying on in town?" Deryk asked.

"I'm going to Chepstow at the end of the month," Oakleigh answered. "By the way, you know when we met at the Carlton last week? Marriage must have been in the air. Loring and his sister and a cousin of mine were having supper with me at one end of the room, you and Mrs. Dawson were at the other; two days later your engagement was announced, Loring's was published the following morning. Shall I see you at Chepstow by any chance? He's giving a sort of long week-end party and a dance in honour of the occasion."

Deryk shook his head.

"I don't know him at all well. Wasn't he engaged before? To Sonia Dainton, surely? Why did they break it off?"

"They weren't very well suited," Oakleigh answered vaguely. "There was no discredit to Loring. He was rather badly knocked out over it and went away from England for some years."

Deryk would have liked to pursue the subject, but his companion's manner had grown suddenly impenetrable.

"He's got pots of money, hasn't he?" he asked. "What has he been doing with himself ever since he came down from Oxford?"

Oakleigh seemed puzzled by the question.

"I don't quite understand. He's usually out of England in the winter, but he used to attend the House of Lords pretty regularly in the old days; and then he had five different places to keep up in different parts of the country. He collected a bit and entertained a bit; I think, between ourselves, he was getting rather bored with it."

Deryk nodded, but the information did not help him. Everything that Loring had was no doubt stable and orderly; large demands and a full treasury from which to meet them; jointures automatically operative for all members of his family; a population of many thousands over his wide-scattered acres dependent on him in greater or less degree. There was all the difference between a settled kingdom and a pioneer's camp. Loring was never faced with odd half-millions in cash. . . .

"How's your uncle?" Deryk enquired suddenly.

"Going strong, thanks, and wants you and your lady to dine with him. He's at the House to-night, but he'll come over to Ireland with me as soon as the House rises, unless civil war really breaks out. I'm not very much alarmed myself. Are you?"

"No, but I think there may be trouble on the continent;

the Austrians are looking nasty. I suppose there's no hope of a general flare-up, everybody fighting everybody else? That *would* be rather fun."

Oakleigh looked at him with raised eyebrows.

"You've a curious idea of fun," he commented.

"I was thinking I'd try to squeeze in somewhere. I don't know anything about war, but I suppose I could volunteer. It would be a new sensation."

"It would be all that. You're a blood-thirsty young ruffian, Lancing. You settle down to domesticity; that'll give you a new sensation and will probably be the making of you."

At the end of dinner Deryk hurried Oakleigh away from his coffee and led him round to see the house in Pall Mall. A policeman was guarding the boarded doorway, but, after a short scrutiny, he let them in, and Deryk spent a glorious hour describing, displaying and arguing.

"But the place is pretty well finished!" Oakleigh exclaimed in surprise. "You've only had it a month or two; and you've got all your carpets and curtains and furniture and pictures. As soon as you've got your electric fittings, the place will be complete."

"Then I'm having my winter garden built on the roof. Oh, I can tell you I've had to put in some pretty hard work."

"But you're not being married for some months, are you? Why all the hurry?"

Deryk made a gesture of impatience.

"I had to get the thing finished," he said.

"I should have thought it would have been more fun to tackle it slowly, room by room, pick up your furniture bit by bit. Now you'll have nothing more to do, and what then?"

"That applies to everything," Deryk answered. He could not imagine why he had brought Oakleigh against his will to see something which he was obviously incapable of appreciating.

Sensitive to tone, Oakleigh changed the subject.

"What does Mrs. Dawson think of it?" he asked, as they came down the stairs into the hall.

"She's coming up to see it in a few days' time."

"She hasn't seen it yet? You're a bold man."

"Oh, she'll approve." He laughed conventionally. "She approves of everything I do."

"Lucky man," Oakleigh substituted.

Deryk took the stereotyped words seriously.

"Do you think so?" he asked after a pause. "If you lived with someone who really agreed with everything you said or did——"

"You silly idiot! You're a lucky man to have anyone as fond of you as she is," Oakleigh explained, gripping Deryk's arm with an unexpected betrayal of affection. "You're a very lucky man to get her at all. Don't forget I've met her, so I know what she's like. But I've broken my promise; you must be sick of hearing her praises sung."

"I—I like it from you, old man," said Deryk shyly.

Idina received his pencilled note next morning and telegraphed that she was coming to town that day. As she walked to the post office it occurred to her that she might be forcing his hand, that he might be engaged, that he might think her importunate. "To do some shopping. Staying at Hans Crescent," she added to the message.

Deryk was still in his rooms when the shorthand writer opened the telegram and read it aloud to him; he was at pains not to betray emotion.

"Will you please ring up Mr. George Oakleigh—somewhere in Prince's Gardens—and say I'm very sorry I can't dine with him, as Mrs. Dawson is coming up specially to see me? Then will you book me a table at Claridge's for half past eight and send a message to the Hans Crescent asking Mrs. Dawson to meet me there at that time?"

He was signing his last letter and preparing to go out, when the girl put down the receiver of the telephone and said that Mr. Oakleigh had already invited several people; would not Sir Deryk bring Mrs. Dawson with him, as Mr.

Bertrand Oakleigh and the others were very anxious to meet her?

"Tell him it's very kind, and I shall be delighted to do so," he said. "And tell the Hans Crescent people that I'll call for Mrs. Dawson at eight-fifteen. You might order the car to be here at eight. That's an improvement on the other scheme."

The girl returned to the telephone and delivered the message. She had seen Idina once, Deryk many times; they filled her with an interest which she tried in vain to dissemble. Often she tried to put herself in Mrs. Dawson's place and imagine the sensation of loving and being loved by her curious, old-young, nervous, happy, impatient employer. She was beginning to find him a little brusque and inconsiderate—spoilt by having had all that money all his life. The plan to dine with the Oakleighs might be an improvement, but it would certainly—in Mrs. Dawson's eyes—not be the same as the projected dinner at Claridge's, for which she was "specially" coming to London. . . .

4

Deryk was well justified in boasting that Idina approved of everything that he did. The corners of her mouth went down for an instant when he hurried rather late into the hall of her hotel and explained in the intervals of dragging her into the car and packing her into a corner, as though he were abducting her, that his plans were changed and that she was bound for a dinner-party where she felt sure that she would not know a tithe of the guests.

"You've got to go through it some time," he pointed out, "and, as you *were* in town, I thought we'd kill two birds with one stone. The Oakleighs have been very decent to me."

"Shall we be very late?" she asked timidly.

"You can leave the moment that you begin to feel bored."

"Oh, I wasn't meaning that. But, if we get away early,—

it's such a lovely night—couldn't we have the car open and go for a drive before bed-time?"

Deryk looked into her eager face and become immediately tolerant.

"Yes, we can do that, if it would amuse you," he said paternally.

George Oakleigh had improvised a large party at short notice. The Lorings had postponed their departure to the country for twenty-four hours, and Deryk found Lord Summertown and his sister, Arden, the novelist, and half a dozen others that he knew, as well as a dozen more who seemed to know him. Their hosts, too, appeared to be killing two birds with one stone, for Loring and Miss Hunter-Oakleigh were receiving the last of many congratulations, as Idina entered the massive, mid-Victorian drawing-room.

"Your husband, m'am, will soon have the privilege of so much of your company," said old Bertrand Oakleigh with the courtesy which shone in his manner like an infrequent jewel in quartz. "You must allow us to make him share the privilege for one night. I am afraid that as yet you are the greatest stranger, so you will have to let me take you down. George will arrange about the others, as soon as we've led the way."

To Idina the long table with its rows of unfamiliar faces was bewildering after her retirement of the last ten months. She was conscious of sitting tongue-tied for the first two courses and even afterwards of venturing on nothing more original than a discreetly-placed "yes" or "no." Her host soon gave up conversation and tried to set her at ease by a monologue on the obvious impossibility of a European war, but she felt that, however uncomplainingly, he was labouring; from time to time she looked up at Deryk, hoping that he would not see how poor a figure she was cutting. It did not add to her comfort when she saw that he was engaged in a triangular sparring-match with Arden and Lady Amy Loring and that they at least were thoroughly at home. These people knew more, they knew each other better, they had more small change to give away; she was abashed to think how hard she must work before she could do credit to Deryk.

On her other side Lord Loring came to Bertrand Oakleigh's relief and put a number of questions about their future plans. (As their first meeting had been almost at her husband's death-bed, she could not help wondering how much he knew or suspected and whether he thought a fresh engagement eight months later indecent.) They were in the same boat; when was she going to be married? Where did they think of living? (He had not seen the new house.) Was it true that Deryk was going into Parliament, as some of the papers had suggested? Finally and with conventionality born of despair, he hoped that she would find a moment to talk to Miss Hunter-Oakleigh upstairs, as he particularly wanted them to be great friends. . . . The sentence was cut short by a sudden silence, followed by a rustle of skirts. He jumped up to open the door, and, as she hesitated in the doorway, trying to catch Deryk's eye for the last time before leaving him, she saw Loring's grey eyes soften and his fingers close for a moment over Violet Hunter-Oakleigh's wrist.

"Well, I congratulate both you boys," said Bertrand Oakleigh gruffly, as he changed to the armchair at the far end of the table. "Your turn now, George."

"To congratulate them? I've done it already."

"To get married," grunted his uncle.

"You're senior to me, Bertrand," George answered, as he began to circulate the port wine. "Any news at the House about the Austrian business?"

"No. It'll fizzle out, but that's no news. The terms are preposterous."

There was a languid, wide-ranging political discussion until George Oakleigh warned his uncle that it was time to move upstairs.

"Don't keep Mrs. Dawson here too late," he whispered to Deryk. "I think she's tired. She was very quiet at dinner."

"She always is rather quiet," Deryk answered, as he extinguished the end of his cigar in a finger-bowl. "Of course, she *has* been very ill, but she was looking all right, wasn't she?"

"I couldn't see properly; I'm too short-sighted. I really only meant that it has taken you a bit of a fight to get her; so take care of her now that you've got her."

Deryk was touched by the unobtrusive kindliness of the tone. He could not help feeling that George would make Idina a far more considerate husband than he could ever hope to be. It was a pity in some ways that they could not change places! Though he would hate to see anyone even admiring her from a distance! It was curious that, while he was sometimes not certain whether he wanted to marry her himself, he was certain that he did not want anyone else to. She had brought that very charge against him when he was being cut out by Sidney Dawson. Apparently he could not live without her—which was all she asked—it remained to be seen whether he could live with her. . . . That was going to be their life.

In the drawing-room he found himself cornered by Loring with an apologetic, eleventh-hour invitation for the house-party at Chepstow, to which George Oakleigh had alluded the previous evening. Idina had already been approached by Violet Hunter-Oakleigh and had accepted provisionally.

"My dear, you're lunching with me on the Tuesday after Bank Holiday," he reminded her.

"But Lord Loring says we can get back in time for that," Idina urged.

"Well, you go, by all means. I'm afraid I shan't be able to get away from London. I'm trying to clear up a lot of odds and ends," he explained, "and, if I don't stay here till I've finished, I shall drag on in town all August. There's no reason why you shouldn't go."

Idina flushed almost imperceptibly and turned to Loring with an air of great contrivance.

"May I send you a line?" she asked. "I really haven't discussed with Deryk what we *are* going to do; I didn't see him till he picked me up on his way here."

Loring bowed in acquiescence, and they separated to vacant chairs.

It was still early when they left, and Deryk adhered to his promise of a drive. The invitation to Loring Castle left a rankling sense that everybody concerned had behaved rather unreasonably. In the first place, Loring no doubt meant well, but it was absurd to ask to his party a man with whom his acquaintance was of the slightest and a woman whom he had once found ill in an Italian hotel. Then it was not quite fair of Idina to give any kind of acceptance without consulting him; now that they were almost man and wife, now that the one was bound by the other's engagements, it was essential to discuss an invitation before accepting it; that was the only possible basis of a common life, and a common life—marriage—must be infernally restricted, involving an appalling surrender of one's personal freedom, at the best of times. Fortunately Idina had not many friends of her own, but it was preposterous to suppose that any husband would get on with *all* his wife's friends, or any wife with all her husband's. . . .

But, conceding that Loring and she had innocently contrived to put him into an awkward corner, he had not extricated himself from it very adroitly or gracefully. Loring probably guessed that he was making excuses; Idina was partly perplexed and wholly disappointed. (She did *love* meeting people.)

"I say, about this party at Chepstow," he began, as the car turned into Kensington Gardens.

Idina laid her hand penitently upon his sleeve.

"Oh, Deryk, I'm so sorry. I didn't actually say I would go, but they seemed so anxious, and I didn't know you were going to be busy——"

"My dear, there's no need to apologise," he interrupted in some embarrassment. "As I understand it, the thing's left open for the present. If you're really keen on our going——"

"I'm not, Deryk, I'm really, really not. I just thought that if you were doing nothing—— I think Miss Hunter-Oakleigh is so sweet, and of course Lord Loring was wonderfully kind to me when I was so ill. But I don't want to go a bit—honestly."

Deryk shrugged his shoulders and sat back with his hat pulled low over his forehead. He had not wanted to go to Chepstow in the first place, but he would sooner be there now than win his present victory over Idina. It was going to be very hard if she always capitulated when he began to discuss elementary difficulties in a proposition.

"I daresay I can manage it," he suggested with lukewarm contrition. "If you'd like to go——"

"I shouldn't, Deryk. I'd much sooner stay in London or go back to Pensington. But I want you to tell me who everybody was and what you talked about when we'd left the room," she went on hurriedly. "Mr. Oakleigh is a wonderfully interesting old man: he was talking about Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy. I felt frightfully ignorant, but it was very interesting all the same. I wish I *wasn't* so ignorant, dear; I wish you'd take charge of me and educate me."

She stretched out her hands in supplication to him, half hoping for an indignant contradiction.

"Don't be too humble, Dina," was all he would say. "In this world you'll find that we're taken surprisingly much at our own valuation."

"You don't take me at *my* valuation, I hope?"

"I don't know what it is."

There was a flash of light, as her cloak fell back and her bare arms met round his neck.

"Sweetheart! I'm not worthy of you and I never shall be, but I don't want *you* to feel it."

"If I felt it, I shouldn't tell you," he answered, trying to laugh her out of her sudden passionate intensity.

They drove for an hour through Hyde Park, Regent's Park and Hampstead up to Hendon and across to Harrow. It was midnight before Deryk had dropped her at the Hans

Crescent Hotel and returned to his rooms, but he felt little disposed to sleep. Changing into a smoking jacket, he filled a pipe, lit it and settled down to sign the formidable pile of letters which his secretary had left on the table to await him. It was an antidote against thinking. He had hardly read through the first before he was conscious of the acrid smell of singeing and, on pushing back his chair, he found that the match which he had thrown away was blazing in the middle of a hole, the size of a saucer, burnt in the carpet. The floor was covered with papers, and the nearest of these were beginning to smoke. He hurriedly stamped out the fire, poured water on the charred remains and flung open the windows to get rid of the fumes. In doing so, his pipe went out, and, when he came to re-light it, his hand was trembling, and, as there was no one present to read his thoughts, he could admit to having been surprised and rather scared. If, instead of signing letters, he had grown drowsy over a book. . . . First the carpet, then the scattered papers, then—as the fire spread—the curtains, table-cloth, chair-covers, his own clothes; he might have been roused to find himself a pillar of flame in a circle of flame; then a wild dash through more fire to a door which he might or might not reach, might or might not open—— You had to wrap yourself in a rug on these occasions, surely, and roll about till the flames were smothered, which must be exceedingly painful; if, of course, you were properly alight, you would probably be so badly injured that you would die of the shock. . . .

With unreasoning passion he picked up the electric reading lamp and threw it on the floor; the telephone was about to follow, when he pulled up short and told himself that he was behaving like a child. Yet it was really exasperating that with everything he could want, nothing to worry him, he was becoming so nervous and fanciful; morbid, too; he was always thinking how men actually died and why they died, what they looked like, what it felt like, what people would say after his death. There was no *reason* for it. His father had died a natural death, there was no morbid strain in the family; someone had once told him—Hats or Raymond Stornaway or his father himself—that, when he first broke down beyond hope of recovery, Sir Aylmer had contemplated suicide. That might be true, or it might not; the fact remained that he had lived on, enduring incredible pain and surmounting indescribable depression, for fifteen years. This utterly unnecessary preoccupation with death was just the thing to provoke tragedy. . . .

He picked up the fragments of the reading lamp and returned to his letters. When he had signed the last, he resolutely picked up a volume of Lecky's "Rationalism," retired with it to his bedroom and began to undress. He had only removed his coat and waistcoat when he recognised the old, abrupt, hated return of wakefulness which could be guaranteed to keep rest at a distance and yet left his eyes and head aching too much to allow of further work. Setting his teeth, he dressed again, put on his hat and started for a stroll through the emptying streets. As he walked eastward towards Northumberland Avenue, a number of men in opera hats, with their coats over their arms, passed him incuriously on their leisurely way from their clubs to bed; the last belated guests of the Carlton were separating, and with every step to the south he found the streets more deserted. On the Embankment he paused to watch the slow passage of the barges, wondering when he had done the same thing before or whether he was merely repeating what he had once done in a dream; his eyes became fixed on the break and parting of the waters against the piles of Hungerford Bridge; the glistening black forked into tumbling silver, and he remembered that silver and black had once been his father's racing colours and that he had once before remembered it, when he sat on the parapet by the Boadicea Group—just before meeting Sidney Dawson equally night-bound, equally ridden with hunger for Idina Penrose. And, curiously enough, a policeman had thought he was contemplating suicide. Curious. . . And at that moment, when they discussed the night-clubs of the 'eighties, neither had suspected the other! And Dawson was dead now. . .

"Blackguard!" Deryk whispered fiercely. Then he was sorry, with a rare, irrational gust of sentimentality. The poor devil had been through the agonies of hell before he died; however he had behaved, he was dead now. The wonderful finality of death! He and Idina never discussed the fellow; his account was closed; his troubles—of course he had troubles like everybody else—were over. And he had disappeared like a puff of smoke, and not twelve people in the world knew or noticed!

That was impossible if you were born in any kind of limelight. "If I put on a jersey and signed on at the Docks, does anyone think *I* should be allowed to disappear?" Deryk laughed bitterly at his own question; the news-cutting agencies had given him more than two guineas' worth of general education. People would think he had been kidnapped; there would be as much fuss as when Livingstone disappeared, rewards would be offered, search parties organised; when the nonsense had begun to pall, some impostor, the modern Orton, would lay claim to his title and estate, there would be another Tichborne case— "They'll never let go of me till they've seen me on the slabs of a mortuary!"

He flung away from the parapet and retraced his steps up Northumberland Avenue, along Cockspur Street and into Pall Mall. Every club was now hushed and dark, but to his fancy a profounder shadow and more inviolable hush permeated and overhung his own house. Speechless and motionless a constable stood sentry by the boarded doorway, only breaking the silence to stifle a yawn.

"Poor devil!" murmured Deryk. It was not the same man that he had found when he took Oakleigh over the place; that was one good thing. Fancy doing this night after night! "Cigarette, constable?"

The man looked cautiously up and down the street and took a cigarette from the proffered case.

"Very quiet about this time o' night, sir," he volunteered.

"Dam' dull, I should call it," Deryk answered. "This place looks a pretty fair mausoleum."

"A what, sir?"

"A tomb. I think two days of this would finish me."

The man turned and gazed at the spectral, deserted house with new interest.

"You think so, sir? It's Sir Deryk Lancing's new town house; one of these American millionaire gentlemen, as I understand."

Deryk turned away to light his cigarette and hide a smile.

"An American, is he?"

"So I hear, sir."

"What sort of a fellow is he?" he asked carelessly.

"I really can't say, sir. Quite a young chap, I believe. It must be a rare thing to be as rich as that when you're still not much more than a boy." He smiled and slapped one hand against his thigh.

"It must be," Deryk assented drily. "Good-night, constable."

"Good-night, sir, and thank you, sir."

"It's a damned mausoleum!" Deryk growled as he strode away and sought his rooms once more.

5

By the morning his mood had changed, and he got up with an indefinite sense that something had happened to bring him relief. As his brain shook free from the last tendrils of sleep, he recollected that he had now more than a week of undisturbed work in prospect. Nobody would so much as knock in a nail for him on Bank Holiday or Sunday in this precious independent England, but he hoped by then to have every room completed, every picture in its place, every chair and table set at the angle which he had ordained when he sketched out combinations and effects on paper, like an impresario. The roof winter-garden, with its wide extent of glazing, would need several weeks more; he would be unable to use it this year, which was a nuisance; and, more than that, his hall would be very dark in the transition stage, while the illuminating dome was being replaced by a flat skylight. But that could not be helped. He would really not complain about anything else, if the inside of the house were finished by the end of another week; then he could move his servants in and have the machine actually working when Idina and the Manistys came for a demonstration.

He hurried down to the house immediately after breakfast and stayed there until luncheon, ordering the disposal of his pictures along the southern gallery. A telephone message from Idina told him that she was calling about five in the hopes of finding him, but that he was not to stay in on her account. He bolted his luncheon, wrote her a hasty note to excuse himself and went back to work within half an hour of leaving it; he was still working when she tried to engage him for dinner, and it was not until midnight that she telephoned and found him at home.

The three calls, only finding him at the third attempt, galvanised Deryk's conscience.

"I'm sorry I was out when you rang up before," he apologised. "I've been slaving away all day, hanging pictures—some of them deuced heavy. These men are too sickening! The *only* work that anyone did at any time during the day was done by *me* single-handed from one till two and again when they'd left for the night. I've simply pulled my arms out of heir sockets. . . . Well, I was on my way to bed when you rang up. Is there anything you want? Just to say good-night. Oh, that's easily done! Good-night, my dear Dina; sleep well and God bless you."

He hung up the receiver and returned to his bedroom, only to hear the bell ring again, as he crossed the threshold.

"Curse these telephones!" he exclaimed, as he ran back. "Hullo! Yes! Sir Deryk Lancing. Who?" He waited, while the connection was made, and then, after a "You're through to Sir Deryk Lancing," heard Idina's voice again.

"My dear, some one cut us off!" she complained.

Deryk repressed his sense of irritation and tried not to feel guilty of discourtesy or impatience towards her.

"Was there anything more that you wanted to say?" he asked gently.

"Yes, I wanted to tell you that *that* wasn't the right way to say good-night." He could almost see her lips curling into a pout. "Like you used to in the old days— Do you remember the first time you rang me up at Ivy Cottage? I was so frightened! I couldn't *think* what anyone wanted me for. Then you, like a darling baby, said good-night and wouldn't let me go to sleep till I'd said it 'properly,' whatever you meant by that. Sweetheart, I know you're tired, but will you just say good-night 'properly'?"

Deryk laughed uneasily.

"Whatever that means?"

"Say, 'Good-night, darling.'"

"Good-night, darling."

A whisper of a ghostly sigh was borne over the wires.

"A *little* more conviction, dear one!"

Deryk laughed again, with no better effect.

"I'm no good on the telephone. Good-night, Dina."

Again he hung up the receiver. This time there was no new call. And the following day Idina cut short her shopping and went back to Pensington. He was informed by a note which he found awaiting him on his return home at midnight; he scribbled a reply of bantering reproach to her for gliding away without taking the trouble to come and say good-bye to him. "But, for the love of Heaven, don't imagine that I'm really angry with you," he concluded. (He had to be so dreadfully emphatic with her.) "I only feel rather ashamed of my own arrangements, because we didn't see any more of each other. But I'm looking forward to Tuesday; if you don't fall in love with my house, I shall very rapidly fall out of love with you."

Then for a week he was undisturbed. As he hurried in and out of his chambers for luncheon, in and out of the County Club for dinner, he seemed to sleep and dream for an hour in a new world with people who talked about civil war in Ireland or a general conflagration in south-eastern Europe. On a lower intellectual plane he found men exultantly discussing their holiday plans and mentally cancelling the days that lingeringly separated them from flannel suits, the spongy, yielding turf of their favourite golf-course and a gently smarting wind blowing in from the sea. They lived wonderfully conventional, regular lives, these K. C., Civil Service, "family business" fathers of children. Would *he* have to transfer his nursery to the East Coast to be regularly and inexorably "braced" for six weeks each summer, whatever else he might want to do? Marriage was an extraordinarily comprehensive thing. . . .

On the morning of his luncheon party he satisfied himself that the house was complete in every respect, with the exception of the winter-garden. Whether his party would be equally complete was open to doubt, for everybody seemed to be getting into a state of amazing restlessness, almost panic. That was where he scored an advantage over other people, that was where his peculiar quality of brain asserted itself; he could detach himself from the prevailing emotion of the moment and see a thing exactly as it *was,* remaining intellectually undisturbed by the elation, hope, fear or dejection of his neighbours. Poor Idina thought him very unsympathetic, when he applied analysis to life, but the quality was *there,* inside him, inherited from his father. It had obvious limitations, of course; he might be unimaginative, slow to take a point, ignorant, at fault in his psychology, but at least what he did see he saw clearly in great black and white lines. On the strength of that alone he could always be richer than other people; he could always earn any salary he liked simply by keeping his head, as his father had done when the homeless survivors of a burnt-out city in the Middle West stampeded from a site that was paved with gold. . . People were going about on Bank Holiday, shaking their heads and gloomily saying, "Is there really going to be a war? Isn't it appalling?" It was curious how their judgment was warped by their sentiment! It might be appalling; certainly there was going to be war: on a very big scale; a fight to the finish with years of suspicion and jealousy to prepare the mood; the sort of war that might go on for any number of years, ranging over several continents and every sea, gradually sucking down one man after another, one nation after another, and probably ending in the exhaustion of the civilised world for a generation. If people would only take the trouble to think, they must see this. England, France, Russia, Germany, Austria—they could not go to war as though it were punt-about. . .

His guests did not disappoint him, though Idina arrived barely in time and protested that the extension of the Bank Holiday had disorganised all train services. Her journey had taken twice the usual time, and all the railway officials expected to have the old time-table knocked to pieces and civilian traffic entirely suspended during the mobilisation. Everyone had made up his mind that war was inevitable, people were now discussing its probable length and making preparations to meet the reduction of their incomes by half. Deryk wondered how *his* income would be affected. So far as there was a general fall in the value of securities, he supposed that he stood to be a very heavy loser, if he tried to sell anything; on the other hand, his income would certainly not diminish and might actually increase, Sir Aylmer had so cunningly succeeded in exacting toll on the necessities of life; people had to live somewhere, to get from one place to another by steamship and railroad, to warm and light their houses; and the Lancing Trust Corporation appeared at every stage to insist on its toll. Income actually increase? The price of money would rise steadily with every new demand by any of the belligerents: he had a considerable balance and enormous liquid assets to realise and lend; instead of being a heavy loser by selling, it might pay him to sell, to get rid of low-yielding securities and take advantage of the appreciating value of money. He must talk to Hats about this; they must get into touch with the directors in New York. . .

"You're very silent, Deryk," Yolande observed, when the luncheon was a quarter-way through without a word from him except to give his orders.

"Sorry! I've been thinking," he exclaimed. "Assuming that war of any kind breaks out, I shall make the deuce of a lot of money, the very deuce of a lot."

Yolande looked at him and suddenly bit her lip.

"I could almost kill you for saying that!" she exclaimed. "When people are going off to be slaughtered, for anyone to sit at home and think how he can make money out of the war, especially when he's a multi-millionaire——"

"That's the reason, stupid!" Deryk answered with grating good-humour. "My money's the first thing about me to be affected by anything. If I weren't a multi-millionaire, I couldn't make much money at the present time, but I can't help it, it's like water running down-hill. You can bet my people in New York have been getting busy the last few days."

Yolande's convictions struggled for a moment with her social propriety.

"Well, don't let's talk about it," she begged him by way of compromise. "My brother's rejoined his regiment this morning, and the next thing I may hear is that he has been killed!" She felt that her tone must be sounding bitter and turned to Idina with a change of voice and expression. "You never met my brother Archie, did you? He's in the Black Watch. . ."

Deryk's mind was recalled to a general consideration of the war. It would be a serious thing, involving vast numbers—literally armed nations at each other's throats—there was no limit to the men who would be wanted.

"Ought I to join the Territorials or do anything of that kind?" he asked Yolande. "I've never done any soldiering before, I should have to start from the beginning——"

"The war would be over before you'd finished drilling," she answered. "Besides, you'd never stand it."

Deryk smiled in confident self-assurance.

"I'm pretty healthy," he told her.

"You'd never stand army discipline, dear Deryk. Think of doing all your moving, talking, thinking by numbers, at someone else's orders, think of having to salute a superior officer, think of having to obey and never being allowed to argue! My dear, you've not got grit enough for the job."

She affected to laugh at him, but there was a taunt in her voice, and he heard more of the taunt than of the laugh.

"I'm sorry," he said stiffly. "This wasn't mere talk, I *was* thinking of volunteering, if war broke out—as it's bound to do now—atoning for my wasted life, you know," he added with heavy sarcasm. Then his eyes shone with sudden excitement. "What an opportunity a thing like this must be to people who've made a mess of their lives! A shipwreck, fire, flood, war—anything of that kind—whether you come out of it alive or not, people think you've redeemed yourself. If I went out to-morrow and took a bullet through my brain——"

"Please don't, Deryk!"

He glanced up to find Idina looking at him with eyes full of tears.

"It's perfectly true," he went on excitedly. "People don't criticise me much as yet, because they think I'm still pretty young, but they'll let themselves go, as I get a bit older, if I don't do something. My life *is* wasted, I've done nothing so far, and the devil of it is that I see no prospect of doing anything in the future. If I got altruistically knocked on the head, everyone would say that it was magnificent of me to be fighting at all—as for being killed. . . ."

"D-Deryk, old man, you're t-talking about yourself t-too much."

It was the first time Felix had spoken. He had sat down smiling with obvious pleasure at finding himself in a new restaurant; he had removed his spectacles and polished them, the better to gaze round the sunlit dining-room; only by slow degrees had he concentrated his interest on his own table, and by that time his wife was flushed and Idina almost in tears, while Deryk seemed to be prosing and swaggering rather objectionably.

"Sorry. Let's talk of something else," said Deryk with heightened colour.

He was staggered to find such a reproof coming from the gentle Felix. Everybody seemed to be down on him to-day, visiting private irritability on him because he saw clearly, and they did not. And, as though he had said the most natural thing in the world, Felix was now chatting away to Idina. . .

"Tell us what the house is like," Yolande suggested in an undertone. "I don't even know how many floors or rooms you've got."

"And you don't in the least want to hear," he retorted with an open sneer for her artificial politeness.

Yolande blushed vividly.

"Indeed I do. The strain of the last few days has tired my nerves, so that I'm afraid of forgetting my manners."

At last Deryk seemed a little out of countenance.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," he whispered fiercely. "I didn't mean to be rude, but I—I can't bear myself."

When luncheon was over they walked from the Ritz to Pall Mall, and Yolande found an opportunity of warning her husband that Deryk was making every preparation for another breakdown. "He's in a state when even Dina gets on his nerves. *I* don't know what to do with him!"

"If he w-wants to be a T-Territorial, *let* him be," Felix urged. "The training would do him all the g-good in the world."

"*I* didn't mean to stop him. He'll hate it, though, and I'm afraid it's come too late for the country and for him. Oh, I wish I knew what *was* going to happen!"

At the bottom of St. James' Street they met George Oakleigh coming down the steps of the Eclectics' Club; almost unconsciously and before they had decided to speak, they were standing in a circle of five, talking with a rare intimacy unjustified by anything in their relationship.

"Quite inevitable, everybody says," reported Oakleigh. "You didn't miss much by not coming to Chepstow, Mrs.

Dawson; the party began disintegrating almost before it arrived, and Lord Loring and I brought up the last heroic survivors this morning. It was an awful week-end! We were so helpless, so far away. Things are no better now that we're back in town, but we don't feel so much out of it. Well, the Kaiser has till midnight, and then no one knows. In a way people were rather optimistic at the Club; of course, the Germans never intended to bring us in, so it is to be hoped that, *with* us in, we shall be able to end the thing within a few weeks. But it's a dreadful business; I can't believe it's true. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must fly; I hear my old uncle's rather seedy."

As he turned and hurried up St. James' Street, Deryk took Idina by the arm and crossed obliquely to Marlborough House.

"Dangerous crossing this," he observed. "Old Maurice Weybridge was very nearly killed here a few years ago—knocked down by a car. Did you ever know him? He was up at the House, and I met him on the Bullingdon. . . . I believe he's permanently lost the use of his legs, which is bad luck on a keen hunting man. I'd sooner have been killed outright."

They had reached the kerb, and Deryk relaxed his arm, but Idina caught him by the wrist and retained her hold.

"Darling, I wish you wouldn't talk so much about being killed!" she implored him. "You made me feel so wretched at lunch, and I went there to enjoy myself because I hadn't seen you for days and days and because I'd never been to the Ritz before. Sweetheart, you don't want to spoil my day, do you? And you will, if you go on talking about being killed."

"So long as it's only talk——" Deryk began.

Idina's grip tightened on his wrist.

"My dear, do you remember the night when we dined with the Oakleighs? I went to bed the moment I got home and fell asleep almost immediately. Then I had the most awful nightmare of my life; I dreamed that you were dead!"

Deryk sorted out his recollections of the night.

"It wasn't such a bad guess," he commented. "I had a diminutive fire in my rooms, and it might easily have proved serious."

"Isn't that what people call telepathy?" she asked with timid devotion.

"It's what damned *fools* call telepathy," he answered roughly. *"I* burned a hole in the carpet, and *you* dreamed that I was dead. If you can trace any kind of connection—let alone the thousands of times you must have had similar dreams without even that amount of coincidence——"

"Never that one, Deryk! The tears were streaming down my face, when I woke up!"

As they approached the doorway of the house, Deryk turned to her with dispassionate, critical interest.

"If I *had* been burned to death——" he began.

"Oh, darling, don't! It would have killed me!"

Deryk shook his head with great assurance.

"No, it wouldn't," he told her. "It would have been a great shock and all that sort of thing, but it wouldn't have killed you; you wouldn't have gone to bed and quietly wilted away. After all, you've been through something that was worse, when you thought I'd got tired of you, that I'd ceased to care for you——"

"I couldn't go through *that* again," she whispered with tense tragedy of tone.

"I was better worth having in those days," Deryk went on, almost to himself. "Cleaner, healthier, more of a man, not so damned neurotic or self-absorbed. . . And, my God, I loved you then, Dina."

"Don't you love me now, Deryk?" she asked with a laugh of happy incredulity.

"I don't believe I could ever love anybody as I loved you then; I don't believe anyone has ever loved anyone else as I loved you. . ." He broke off with a thin-lipped laugh and looked up at the house with its great studded door now exposed to view for the first time and the shallow marble steps at last liberated from their sloping plank causeway. "My servants move in to-night; the only work remaining to be done is the roof-garden, and, despite the extra bank holiday, I believe I've got a few stalwart glaziers to come and put in a few hours' work. Hurry up, Yolande! You're keeping everything waiting. Ladies and gentlemen, the Lancing Mausoleum will now be declared open!"

Felix threw away the stump of his cigar, and all collected on the steps, while Deryk fitted his latch-key into the lock.

"Deryk, don't! Please," whispered Idina.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed. "It's your fault for talking about your dream. That night after the fire I strolled out into the streets and talked to the bobby on duty here. In the course of conversation, I happened to describe the house—at night, you understand, with planks over the doorway and round blobs of white paint on all the windows, and an amazing great moon up behind—I described it as being like a mausoleum. The word happens to have lingered in my memory, but that's all. I can assure you that's all. Curious how a phrase sticks. . . I had nothing else in mind! . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

A QUESTION OF EXPEDIENCY

> "Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartly will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can he want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied."
>
> J. M. SYNGE: Riders to the Sea.

I

DERYK'S latch-key turned stiffly in the lock; he pulled the bolts out of their sockets and flung open the double doors, watching with pride their perfect poise and deliberate, smooth movement. After the heat and glare of Pall Mall the hall with its mosaic pavement and white marble pillars seemed cold and dark; triangular shafts of light, varying in extent and intensity, shone into the gloom from the doors of the rooms opening out of the hall, but the great central glass dome, which had been used to light the whole interior of the building, was now removed, and the circular orifice was covered with planks. Feet could be heard passing and repassing over them, until the planks bent in the middle and let in chinks of light on either side; from time to time there came the merciless, hollow reverberation of a hammer on a steel girder's end, but no workmen were visible, and the noise alone suggested their presence.

"Then I have a glass skylight, flush with the roof," Deryk explained; "and the winter garden, or whatever you choose to call it, above that. I'll take you up there when I've shewn you round the rest of the place. Starting with the ground floor, you have dining-room, smoking-room, ball-room and my own study. We'll take the dining-room first."

For two hours he led them through room after room, explaining, describing and answering questions. Neither Felix nor Idina was in a position to criticise with knowledge, but in an unmethodical, haphazard way Yolande had picked up a considerable amateur knowledge of furniture, which was at least sufficient to impress Deryk and to enable her to appreciate how easily he surpassed her. Equally at home in Italy, Spain, France and England, he had carried out a dozen schemes in as many rooms with the minutest attention to rugs and hangings, fire-places, illumination, pictures, ornaments and bibelots, until each room was a complete and perfect example of a period in the art of decoration.

"I had no idea it was to be like this!" Yolande gasped, as he led her away from the last of three Empire drawing-rooms.

"You didn't know I was keen on furniture? That's really why I took this place. Ripley Court was so crammed that you could do nothing short of improvising a bonfire and cleaning out everything. This gave me an opportunity."

They were standing on the south side, looking down on to Carlton Garden, and Yolande felt that with a single book on one of the tables, a single piece of embroidery dropped carelessly across the arm of one of the chairs, the room would look as if it had been continuously inhabited since the house was built.

"And you did it all in about two months! No wonder you're feeling overdone!"

"It was hard work, but that never killed a man. I'm all right, Yolande; you can say I've had too much London, if you like, but that's all. And I can go away now that this place is pretty well finished. By the way, you must come and see my roof garden."

He hurried her the length of the gallery and up a staircase past the second floor on to the flat roof. Felix and Idina were left to follow as best they might, and indeed with as long an interval as possible; Deryk was deriving a wonderful, unexpected enjoyment of the afternoon from his discussions and disagreements with Yolande; he had always known her to be intelligent, but he had never imagined that she had any knowledge of furniture. They had fought out each room, almost each piece in each room; and she had not only told him where she thought him wrong, but had given him reasons which set him thinking. That was Yolande's greatest charm; she had a personality, strong individual preferences and reasons to back them. She might be wrong, but she was never weakly wrong; when her one epithet for Mozart was "obvious," when she preferred Verdi to Rossini, when she failed to see that Strauss was as far ahead of Wagner as Wagner of Donizetti, when she considered Miss Austen and Stevenson the most overrated of all the great nineteenth century prose writers, she was not to be shaken or suppressed without a stiff fight. If you told Idina that Charles Kingsley was anything but seventh-rate, she would probably believe you. . .

"I've never seen such a view in my life!" Yolande cried, with her hands resting on the rail running round the edge and her eyes, with pupils ecstatically dilated, travelling slowly in a half-circle from east to west, from the Admiralty Arch to the Foreign Office and the tops of the Abbey towers, thence to Westminster Cathedral, Buckingham Palace and the Mall almost below her.

"It was worth keeping," said Deryk proprietorially counting the iron standards which were to hold his glass frame.

She turned critically to the boarded skylight.

"Of course, you're going to make your hall very dark," she warned him.

They were still heatedly engaged in argument when Idina joined them, Deryk elaborately explaining that his new skylight would illuminate through an area actually larger by forty square inches.

"But you've got another roof over and above that," Yolande demonstrated. "Well, Dina, what do you think of it all?"

"It's divine!" She stood with her hands clasped, pivoting on one heel and looking about her. "Deryk, you really are wonderful. And Mr. Oakleigh told me that I was extraordinarily trusting to let you decorate my drawing-room without consulting me! Every room's so perfect that I don't know which I like best."

"You mustn't make him conceited," Yolande cut in. "I was telling him that he's spoiling his hall by taking away so much of the light. Don't you think I'm right?"

Idina looked at the sky-light of thick frosted glass, lying on its iron frame by the side of the circular opening in the roof.

"I suppose it *will* make it rather dark," she agreed.

Deryk lit a cigarette and threw away the match with a gesture of impatience.

"How is it *possible* to say that without seeing the sky-light *and* the glass roof in place?" he demanded. "This actually lets in *more* light, with less reduction for frame, than the old dome. If you'll take the trouble to *look*. . . ."

Conscious that he was becoming shrill and excited, he bent down to the opening and untied the builders' tarpaulin sheet; then he loosened the rope that coupled the planks together and pulled half a dozen away from the middle.

"*Now* you can see!" he called from the far side, rather red in the face, as he dusted his clothes.

"Ah, yes. D-don't fall in!" Felix answered. He sauntered away to the north side and looked down upon Pall Mall. "S-something's upset him," he whispered to Yolande; "he'll be rude to her in one m-minute. T-tell her to come to tea with us; then you'll br-break up the party."

Yolande nodded, looked at her watch and issued the invitation with fine spontaneity. As Idina began to accept it, however, Deryk abandoned a sketch of the roof garden which he was drawing for her in his pocket-book and intervened with an announcement that tea was actually awaiting them in his rooms.

"I'd no idea it was so late," he said. "Dina, will you be hostess and take Yolande and Felix along? I'll follow as soon as I've finished the sketch and put this gear back in place: I daren't leave it open in this climate, or I shall get my hall flooded. Straight down the staircase, and shut the front door as you go out, because there's not a soul in the place. I'll be with you in a few minutes."

As the women picked up their skirts and walked down the still unpainted top flight of stairs, Deryk gathered the planks into a pile and sat down on them to finish his drawing. He seemed to have worked so hard to keep his team together, and, with the exception of a moment's conversation with Yolande, the whole, endless party had been so disastrous a failure that he was glad to be by himself for however short a respite he could secure. Was it the prospect of war that was making them all so jumpy, causing Yolande to lose her temper with him, Felix to snub him and Dina—well, it had been the other way round with her, he had been vilely rude to her, but she *must* develop a mind of her own, and her fragments of criticism, as they floated across to him, were worthy of schoolgirls admiring a baby or a new Pekinese. She did not do him very much credit; and it was so infernally monotonous. . .

He finished the sketch and strolled to the north side, where he stood leaning against the rail and smoking another cigarette. Pall Mall seemed astonishingly full of soldiers, every third man was in khaki. . . . From a set of bachelor chambers opposite him came the sound of a piano and of inexpert fingers trying to conjure the Marseillaise from the keys. ("*Not* like that!" he exclaimed. "Dam' good mind to go over and play it for him.") The war was all-penetrating, all-enveloping, though the ultimatum would not expire till midnight. Then probably the entire population of London would assemble in the streets and shout "God Save the King," and there would be an orgy of cheap patriotism until the war was over—Roberts and Kitchener on buttons, sold in the street; and a great deal of flag-waving, as in the old South African days. . . He regretted bitterly that he had never had any training as a volunteer; it was not that he cared a straw for the neutrality of Belgium or whatever the trouble was, but he did not want to be left out of a new experience which others would go out and enjoy. And it would take him at least six months to train, and by that time the war would be over. . .

At the end of the six months everything would go on as before, a war between England and Germany was a war between a whale and an elephant; he had thought at luncheon that it must go on for years, but a war on this scale could only be a matter of weeks; Germany would just be shewn that she could not browbeat Europe at pleasure, everybody would lose a good many lives and spend an appalling amount of money, but higher taxation, possibly some form of military training, would be the only change. He would go on at Ripley Court or here; some people, apparently—to judge from the state of panic at the Club—were losing money, but others would make a lot—he was one—and, so long as money was in the hands of the same class, it mattered little which members held it; the old social life would go on as before, there was no hope of excitement as in '71—an abdication, a commune. Really, he was a baronet, so perhaps he ought not to talk (though he had not been consulted), but could anything be imagined more ridiculous than the relics of feudalism in England? He would fight on anybody's side if it made England a republic; but it was one thing to make England a republic, and something very different to make the Englishman republican. . .

Because *he* was republican and in despite of Sir Aylmer's warning against "superiority," he had always rather despised the Junker gang in England; he was in it, but not of it; he was really not of any particular class or school, and that explained much—his boredom, his want of sympathy with other people's ridiculous preoccupations, his utter inability to find anything to do. . . . Now that the great house was almost finished, he was out of employment, unless he took over from Hatherly and the London office the English control of the Trust,—which was really *making* work for himself. Of course, he might go on looking for some imaginative use to which his money could be put, but he was growing to be sceptical over that; Sir Aylmer was not the first millionaire in history, but of all their number Cecil Rhodes alone had departed from the facile practice of giving doles to libraries and hospitals. It was not so easy, after all, whatever Raymond Stornaway might think —as he would find if any unexpected accident within the next few weeks put him in possession of the estate to which he was already heir. . .

Deryk abruptly let fall his cigarette. He had just remembered that Raymond had set out for Vienna some weeks before and was probably still out there. And, if he did not get away very speedily, he would find himself shut up in a fortress, or whatever you did with foreigners who happened to be in your country when war broke out. Poor fat Raymond! How he would hate it! He must find out from Yolande whether any news had been received, whether he had actually got back (it was hard to keep count of time when you were busy on things, as he had been on the house, for weeks on end). And, by the same token, they must be waiting for him at his rooms!

To his dismay he found that it was past six o'clock, but he could still hardly bear to go back to them. The fact of the matter was that they got on his nerves and that he preferred his own company; this was really the most exquisite moment of the afternoon, when he had got rid of them all; a man must be very much in love to prefer any woman's society to his own. Of course, there were moments when you yearned to be with a woman, as he had yearned when he tramped the streets, with restless, hot eyes, yearning to hear Idina's voice rather timidly saying "good-night" to him over the telephone. She had a very sweet voice and beautiful eyes and an extraordinarily slender softness and warmth; one arm would go all the way round her shoulders without unduly crushing her—as he knew; at such moments, seen from such angles, she was irresistible; but the fascination was momentary, and he was trying to decide whether he would sooner forego moments of ecstasy or be spared hours of retribution. Boredom, rather, to improve the antithesis. . .

What would their common life be? With her, as with any other woman, there would be constant sacrifices of personal choice, eternal surrender to whim, everlasting exposure to the blackmailing charge that he was causing her pain; he must expect what every man had to endure through tying himself to something irrational and capricious, it was the age-old penalty of being too weak to live independent of woman's company. And, in addition to humouring her, he must share his life with her, they must do everything in pairs. . . It took some imagination and considerable time to appreciate what that meant; he knew his own life at Ripley Court and in London and he could form a rough conception of the extent to which it would be modified if he associated a woman with it. How far the modification would prove irksome depended entirely on the woman. So far he had only lived with Lucile Welman, and those formative weeks had been made possible by the physical spell which she cast upon him, by the primitive, possessive hunger which nerved her to retain him, by her experienced arts and patiently acquired psychology. Other men had lived with her, she understood them; she could do what she liked with them so long as the insecure union lasted; she could make the union last as long as she usually wanted and longer than most women contrived. . .

That was all his knowledge of a common life, and even while it was coming to him he knew that the life was abnormal, that it was based on nothing but passion and that, within limits, he could end it when he chose. Passion was but one of a hundred things in marriage; and, when sympathy waned and common interests died, when their life ceased to be a honeymoon in paradise and became a habit in England, when the monotony of the habit was appreciated in its full horror, then he could *not* end it at will. Each of them could look forward to a further fifty years of life—and he had been rude to her that afternoon, not for the first time, because she agreed with him too readily

—no, this time she had disagreed too hastily—it was really rather a wolf and lamb relationship. He was fond of her, he hated finding fault with her or seeing the corners of her mouth droop, but his nerves were restless and disordered, everything she did seemed to irritate him, and he spoke to her, the woman he was going to marry, in a tone that he would never dare adopt with, say, Yolande. She would never stand it, for one thing; and quite right, too. Apparently Idina would.

Deryk jumped up and walked to the railings on the north side, looking down almost as if he expected to see a search party coming to meet him.

"I can't! My God, I simply can't!" he cried, as though someone were pleading.

"It will break her heart. Well, it would kill us both if we married. I don't love her! That's the long and short of it."

He flung away and sat down again on his seat of planks, burying his face in his hands and squeezing his palms against his temples.

"I simply can't," he groaned.

2

The moment that he had put his confession into words Deryk felt that he had known it all along, that, when he talked of the old days and such love as no other man had felt for a woman, he really meant that he had not then taken the trouble to analyse as he was now doing; he *could* never have married her, he could not even live with her as he had lived with Lucile Welman, had either of them wanted to. Yet how perfect a wife she must have been to Sidney Dawson, hideous though the human sacrifice had seemed; temperamentally the two had far more in common. If he went ahead with the present marriage. . .

Deryk found himself thinking aloud and now gravely shaking his head. Once his eyes were open, he could never close them again; the engagement had to be broken, and it was only a question how he could mercifully break it; and when; and with what introduction. . . Obviously he could do nothing at present; there could be no crueller choice of time than when she had been inspecting and admiring the house in which they were to live. On the other hand, every day strengthened her in the presumption that he was in love with her—made harder the breach, when it came; and it was tantamount to saying that the better he knew her the more impossible she seemed. He had had his opportunity freely offered a week or two ago: if he ever felt that he had made a mistake, he was to say so. Well, he had thrown away the chance derisively, with vows and protestations. What new reason could he now put before her?

And what could he tell Yolande, Hats, Raymond, the three or four thousand people who had so eagerly congratulated him? There would be the usual announcement that the marriage would not take place; and then—and then! Idina, buried and forgotten as Lady Lancing, would never be so well-known, so notorious—pointed at, whispered about—as the Mrs. Dawson who had jilted Deryk Lancing—or been jilted by him—no one seemed to know the rights of the thing. . . . If he ever did anything, if it were ever worth anyone's while to write a book about him, Idina would go down to posterity as the woman who pre-eminently had *not* married him!

A pleasant prospect when the light of publicity first broke upon her! But that was not the worst; the really pleasant prospect was the meeting when he had to say, "I cannot stand the idea of marrying you." The brutality continued naked, however many clothes you wrapped round it. It would kill her—if people ever were killed by this sort of thing. Or rather, she would catch a chill, and the doctor would say, as that other doctor had said of her father, that she had no stamina, no resistance, made no effort to keep alive. And her murder would lie across his soul. . .

He began to pace slowly backwards and forwards, looking obliquely down on the foreshortened traffic of Pall Mall. Once again he was astonished at the number of soldiers hurrying to and fro in the early turmoil of mobilisation; if only Sir Aylmer had put him into a crack regiment to keep him out of mischief for a few years. . . ! Good Heavens! He might have been in Belgium before the week was out, with every likelihood of getting killed. And there was all the difference in the world between breaking an engagement and having it broken by the hand of God. In the social limelight Idina would then be the beautiful young widow with the tragic history—"engaged to Sir Deryk Lancing, the richest bachelor of his time; then he got killed in the war of 1914. Twice a widow, so to say, before she was five and twenty—very sad." But she would not die of the shock; her stamina, her resistance, her will to live would bear her triumphantly through the perils of that imagined chill; probably she would to some extent keep herself alive with the glorious boast that Deryk Lancing had loved her, that he might be called dead, but she knew that in reality he was watching and waiting—

"I had my task to finish,
"And he had gone home to rest;
"To rest in the far bright heaven. . . ."

(He could imagine Idina finding grandeur in the songs of Jacques Blumenthal and feeling herself spiritually uplifted by them.) She would not let herself die, because she had his memory to tend. . . Heavens! what make-believe these good women perpetrated when they were afraid to face reality; they would invent a thousand reasons, elaborate a hundred stories to shirk disagreeable truth; he would have his work cut out for him to make Idina believe that he did not care for her enough to marry her. . .

As he said the words to himself he was conscious that his thoughts were moving in an ever diminishing circle; he was not yet prepared to look at the centre where the journey would end; he had timidly stepped aside on to an outer ring when he talked of breaking any kind of news to Idina; that was old, rejected; he could never tell her anything;

if the engagement were broken, it would be by the hand of God. . .

Of course, there was never any objection to guiding the hand of God. He could not go out and get killed in this war, because there was not time (and he was not at all anxious to be killed); he could not get himself certified unfit to marry, because everybody knew that he had not had six months' illness in his life. There was always the possibility of disappearing. He could open an account under an assumed name with some remote bank, pay in a large sum of money—Bah! He could not trouble even to work out the first preliminaries. When he disappeared, any bank clerk who had read Jekyll and Hyde (or had a spark of native imagination) would track him by means of the second account, the tell-tale large transfer. And, if he disappeared with a five pound note in his pocket, prepared to earn his own living, who would let him disappear? Scotland Yard, to begin with, would never rest till he was found; the four thousand people who knew him well enough to congratulate him on his engagement, the four hundred thousand who, to judge by the press cuttings, knew his features and were interested in his doings, all of these would join hands in a double line, like one of the du Maurier nightmares in *Punch,* to make him run the gauntlet wherever he went. He had travelled rather like a Crown Prince, he was known everywhere. If he tried to slip away into the desert, somebody would recognise him at Gib. or Alexandria —and the gang that travelled by liner was much the same in personnel. . . . He was too well-known to disappear by growing a beard and shifting his domicile twenty miles. That was one of Wells' many clevernesses in "The History of Mr. Polly"; a man in Mr. Polly's position *could* disappear; when solvent, his whole estate was but a few hundreds, he was unknown, no one was interested in him, even his wife was tied by the ankle to the joint haberdashery business so that she could not follow him through the nearest wood, over the first dividing range.

Deryk had to remind himself that he was keeping his eyes averted from that centre to which his circling thoughts were winding. He was shirking something; he was not staying out there to brood over the technical clevernesses of Mr. Wells. If you put him in a corner and demanded to know why he was there at all? Well, he was gradually discarding impossibilities, and each discard brought him on to an inner ring, brought him a stage nearer the middle. He could not marry Idina; he could not tell her that he would not marry her; he could not run away and lie in hiding; he could only—Deryk was surprised to find his tongue moistening two rather dry lips—*he* could do deuced little, but the hand of God might break the engagement, and he might put his fingers on God's wrist, so to say.

It was a great thing to have this strong, detached, Lancing brain! With everything pointing to suicide (he could use the word now; rather enjoyed it, in fact), he could think as collectively and in as orderly and logical a way as ever before. Other people would no doubt be bowled over by the discovery of what they were obscurely contemplating; all that happened with him was that his brain worked, if anything, a trifle faster, a trifle better, a trifle more cogently and coherently. The first thing to consider was how much he wanted to live; then how he *could* take his own life and make the world believe a verdict of death by natural causes, when the same thing was being tried perhaps once a week and never succeeding.

He did not want to die at all. Whenever he thought of it, he was filled with exuberant self-pity—like Villon in "A Lodging for the Night"—(Why the devil did he keep dragging in these facile literary allusions?) He was so young, he had enjoyed life so much, he still appreciated the esoteric beauties of music, of colour and form so much more fully than anyone he knew. Even if he never created anything, even if he confessed to failure and left his father's wealth unbroken and triumphant, he was a rare critic wasted! Of course from one point of view there was nothing to be said for dying old rather than young; in either event you stopped short just at the moment when you wanted to see what your successors would do; it was like leaving a room and wishing yourself back there to hear what people were saying about you. He *would* like to see what kind of show old Raymond would put up. At least—he was really not sure whether Raymond was still his heir. He *had* been, in the will drawn up before the Hellenopolis expedition—(God! how long ago that was! And what unreal nonsense it seemed now, when nations were going to war and he was gambling with his own life!); then, when the engagement took place, Hats was instructed to draw a fresh will, though of course that would not be signed until after marriage; presumably, therefore, Raymond's title remained. Where had he got to? Oh, yes, it would be fun to see what Raymond would do with the money. . . Of course, if the old will had been cancelled, every penny would go to the Crown. It was a wonderful thought, that! All that his father had slaved to accumulate, all that he had inherited, their pictures and furniture, the books and collections, their houses, the very roof on which he was pacing—all would go with its glamour and temptation, like the Rajah's diamond when it left Prince Florizel's hand and described an arc of dazzling light before dropping to the unrevealing mud of the Seine. (It was no good: if he were fated even to *think* like one of the rather precious middle articles that he used to write for George Oakleigh at the very beginning, well, it could not be helped. By the way, poor old George would be rather upset! Still—) It would disappear, this monstrous engine of wealth, as silently as it had come into existence; it would become a memory, a legend, finally it would be utterly forgotten: you would have to refer to the Sussex guide books to find how, when and why the nation became possessed of Ripley Court. For a moment one small tremor had been felt in a corner of the world; the tempo had been accelerated half a bar, but with the restoration of the money to the vast, indeterminate "public" from which it had come, the tremor would cease, the time would become regular again. All that the Lancings had been or done would be wiped away; wiped away, too, their joint effort to scratch their individual personalities on the slate that recorded nothing but names.

"I don't wonder!" Deryk whispered.

He was now remembering Sir Aylmer's last counsels, his pleading that, whatever else happened, the house should be kept as the symbol of continuity, the shell of the family, the *something* that survived when everything else went. Poor old man! He too had been through moments like this, then. He had seen what an amazing big figure he cut in—say—"Who's Who?", with his title and his dignities, his great house, his "owns about 19,000 acres". . . . And, by Jove, what a poor thing you looked when you were face to face with death (who didn't care whether you had a title or not) . . . What would the old man think—what *was* he thinking, if he could look down or up or round the corner or from wherever it was that the souls of the dead went—what would he think of his son's throwing up the sponge and bringing *his* family to an end? (It was a wonderful thing to be able to *end* a family that had continued in a traceable, recognisable form for five hundred years.) Or would he not care? If there were any God, if he had any irony in him and if he had to construct some kind of Hell (the first ethical duty of any creative god was to construct a place of torment for his creatures), there was no subtler punishment than in condemning a man to watch his successors at work on the fabric which he had founded. . . .

A breath of wind from the south-west brought him the subdued note of Big Ben. He counted idly and was aghast to find that it was seven o'clock. What those others must think of him! He looked down into Pall Mall and instantly threw himself prone on the dusty leaden roof, dragging himself a moment later with sinuous movements, like a snake on sand, to the edge of the parapet. Far below, sauntering easily on the shady side of St. James' Square and descending into Pall Mall, he saw Felix, Yolande and Idina. They were getting uneasy, they were wondering what had happened to him when he was alone in the great, silent house; was he faint, giddy, affected by the sun? He could not tell them that he had spent more than two hours drawing one sketch, smoking three cigarettes and, well, thinking. He must leave proof of a little more industry than that. . . Down in the street the three were standing on the opposite kerb, waiting for a negotiable gap in the long chain of taxis, Felix talking and stammering hard, the others occasionally nodding. Then they crossed and came too much under him to be seen any longer. He jumped up and was dusting his clothes, when the tap of a cane on his front door rang clear and echoing through the empty hall; Deryk tiptoed guiltily to the open skylight and knelt down, leaning on his hands and peering into the shadows. The tapping was repeated; then someone began to whistle (it was some kind of bugle call—"Officers' wives has puddings and pies; soldiers' wives has skilly"—some nonsense of that kind). Well, they could not break down that door, and no one seemed inclined to open it for them. The whistling, like the tapping, came to an end, and, as Deryk once more threw himself on his face and crawled to the parapet, he was in time to see their three backs (puzzled and hesitating, or so he fancied) paraded on the kerb, diving between two waves of traffic, reaching the far side and turning for a last enquiring look at the uncommunicative house.

Then they disappeared, and his world was his own until these servants came to take possession. He had said "Tuesday night," naming the hour, and from what he knew of the English domestic servant, they would come at about midnight. Or else within the next five minutes; you never knew where to have these people. If they came soon, there would be someone to open the door when the next search party arrived; before then he must provide himself with an excuse.

Returning to his old seat on the piled up planks, he began to make and discard half a dozen hasty sketches of his roof garden, crumpling the sheets between his fingers and tossing them hastily in a semi-circle round him. Then he returned the book to his pocket, pulled off his coat and began to drag the planks back to their old position over the skylight. He worked with the roughness of impatience, and the first plank slid far beyond the orifice and balanced on the opposite edge, dipping and rising like a see-saw. "Couldn't do *that* again, if I tried," Deryk murmured, as he walked round and steadied it in place. "Damnable noise it would have made!" He was grown so used to the silence and solitude of the last two hours that he shivered at the idea of one moment's tense expectancy, a crash like the jar of two warring planets, the echo, echo, echo, fading gradually beyond his ears' power to recapture it. Everyone in the street—everyone in London—would jump out of his skin, pull up short, help to swell a crowd, ask silly questions. . .

The second and third planks dropped into position; he threaded the rope over and under them, drew it taut and began to drag up the tarpaulin. In another five minutes his work would be over. Three minutes to wash his hands, brush his clothes. Then he could vamp up an apology and hurry back to his guests.

Deryk had an indefinite feeling that he was letting slip a great opportunity.

3

Obedient to instructions Idina had escorted the Manistys to Deryk's rooms and ordered tea. All three knew him too well to delay their own movements a single instant on his account; they sat down without noticing the time, began their tea, finished it, smoked one or two cigarettes and discovered to their common amazement that it was six o'clock and that Deryk must have been away rather more than an hour. With opportunity for reflection and candour all would have confessed to a sense of relief in escaping from him while his present mood was on.

"I can't think what can have happened to him!" Idina exclaimed.

Yolande noticed that her cheeks were mother-of-pearl in colour and that her hands played restlessly with a platinum watch chain round her neck.

"I can think of so many things that it's difficult to choose," she answered easily. "You're going to marry him, Dina, but I'm sure I know him better than you do. If you went back now, you'd probably find him in the cellars, projecting a swimming bath and not remembering a single word of tea or us or anything; or it's quite likely that he's recollected a piece of tapestry at Ripley Court and is gaily motoring down to see if it will do for the hall. That's the sort of thing that used to make poor Sir Aylmer so angry; Deryk, of course, never noticed anything until his father used to say, 'Dinner will be at 8.30, and I shall send Benson to see that you are dressed by 8.15.' And then, of course, there was a row, and Deryk protested that he was being treated like a child. So he was, poor lamb, but then he *is* a child."

Idina did not seem to be listening, but she noticed the silence after the last words and murmured, half to herself,

"I wish he'd come!"

"L-look here, Mrs. Dawson," Felix began, struggling to his feet from a very low armchair. Yolande shook her head and pushed him back again.

"Don't fuss, good people," she begged. "If he's there, he certainly won't come until *he's* ready; if he's not there, we shan't find him. Quite seriously, Dina, I got an idea at lunch that Deryk was a bit overwrought—doing too much, you know; he was like this before his illness in the autumn. If you want my advice, you'll simply ignore him; don't let him think that you're fretting or worrying, keep yourself in the background—oh, I know you do! I was only warning you that everybody and everything are rather apt to get on his nerves this afternoon."

Idina's slow nod of acquiescence closed the discussion, and all three tried to remember what had been engaging their attention when they unexpectedly noticed the time. The conversation smouldered, however, and would not break into flame. Soon after half past six, though Idina would have sat on in endless, obedient devotion, Yolande had to shew her some mercy. Under cover of wanting to take Felix home, she suggested that they should all go by way of Pall Mall and tap at the door on the off chance that Deryk was still there.

"Probably he's gone off to find his architect," she suggested, as they set out; "or else he's just heard——"

She went on accumulating explanations until Felix broke in unexpectedly with an account of a winter garden which he had once seen on the roof of a house in New York.

"C-couldn't place it before," he said in explanation of his long silence. "But th-that's what his description c-called to my mind; I shouldn't be surprised to f-find he'd been remembering that more or less unconsciously. Are you ready? We c-can get across now."

He gave an arm to either and crossed to Deryk's front door. It was locked and unyielding, the bell brought no one to them, and, when he tapped the panels with the head of his cane, they seemed too massive to admit of the sound's being allowed to penetrate. It was in the last resort that he put his lips to the keyhole and whistled a jigging bugle call.

"There's no one there," he pronounced at length, shaking his head. "Wh-what now, Yolande?"

Out of the corner of her eye she glanced at Idina.

"He's forgotten all about us," she decided. "Well, we ought to be getting home. Dina, if you're staying at the Hans Crescent, we'll drop you on the way. Or, if you'll accept Bank Holiday fare—*literally* it's cold beef and a fruit tart—will you come and keep us company?"

Idina roused herself from her attitude of dumb expectation and turned her eyes slowly away from the door.

"It's awfully kind of you," she said, "but I think I'll go back to Deryk's rooms for a few minutes. It's so odd, you know——"

"My dear, he'll all *right,*" Yolande interrupted. "If you knew him a tithe as well as I do——"

"But he said he was coming at once! He was just finishing a little sketch; then he was going to put those boards back; that was all. *I* saw that he wasn't well at lunch. . . . If he's been taken ill!"

Yolande slipped her arm through Idina's and led the way back through St. James' Square.

"We'll come with you," she said, with a quick glance at her husband. "Then—then we can all go home together. My dear, I keep telling you Deryk's all right, only I think he's been overtaxing his nerves. There's nothing wrong with his health, but he was a little—what shall I say?—abstracted. It's curious, you know;" she went on with an attempt to be detached and philosophical; "for the last three days I've done nothing but talk about war or listen to other people talking about it. Since we started lunch, we've hardly mentioned it—except for that moment with Mr. Oakleigh. Yet I suppose it's bound to come; and, when it comes, I feel in my bones that it will end for all time the sort of life we've all been leading. I don't know what will come, but I know it will be something quite different; and I couldn't get rid of a feeling of incongruity the whole time Deryk was shewing us over the house. He seemed to have ransacked the past to enrich the present—as though the present were not going to join the past by midnight. Deryk's so wonderfully self-centred; I don't believe he's conscious of anything going on, I don't believe he knows that thousands of men and women are walking up and down, clasping and unclasping their hands and praying to something they've never prayed to before, to help them back from the cliff-edge. . . ." She paused suddenly, surprised at her own intensity of feeling. "Well, here we are! I suppose we may as well go in and wait. I'm sure you want to smoke, Felix."

The second vigil was worse than the first in that it was deliberate and that, instead of waiting a moment or two for a man who was late, they had thrown their other engagements to the winds in order to hold together until a man who was missing had been found. To herself Yolande persisted that all was well, but she hardly tried any longer to convince Idina. It was so absurd! At any moment the door would burst open, and Deryk would cry out, "I *say!* I'm sorry! I entirely forgot all about you." He was probably at the Club. . . . Certainly he had behaved like this a dozen times to her in the course of their friendship, and she was afraid that this would be his standard of conduct to poor Idina, when they were married. In a way, it was just as well that she was getting a sample of it beforehand, but she would have to acquire rather more placidity if she intended to survive more than three months of married life.

"He's probably arranging about the servants," Yolande suggested after a silence. It was certainly inartistic, perhaps it was rather foolish to go on finding new reasons, but Idina was staring vacantly out of the window, Felix was softly beating the side of his leg with a paper knife, and all of them were ill at ease in the dingy, worn bachelor rooms. No one commented on her sally; no comment was possible. "He said something about servants, didn't he?"

"They're coming in to-day," said Idina with an effort. "But what time——"

She stopped with eyes suddenly dilated and her hand pressed against her side as the street door slammed and, a moment later, feet were heard coming up the stairs. The slow clamber gave way to a rapid reverberation on the thinly-carpeted boards of the corridor; the handle rattled, and the door was flung open. Idina, Yolande and Felix were straining forward like the leading birds in a flight, as a young officer in uniform clattered into the room.

"Lord! I'm so sorry!" he exclaimed, pulling back and addressing himself in some embarrassment to Felix. "I—er—I came to see Lancing; seems to be a goodish party on."

Yolande started and held out her hand.

"Why, it's Lord Summertown!" she cried. "I didn't recognise you in all this war-like get-up."

"Oh, I'm off immediately. I looked in to say good-bye to Lancing. Will one of you, Manisty, Mrs. Dawson, Mrs.

Manisty, will *one* of you remember to give the old man my love and say I called for his blessing? Good-bye, everyone! I'm in a fairish hurry. If I've got to be killed, don't let's be too quick about the business, say I; but my old colonel—you can't start killing his junior officers soon enough. Cheero!"

He clattered out of the room with even more speed, noise and imperturbability than he had shewn on entering. Idina had turned her face to the window once more, sick with disappointment and doubt, but the other two were exhilarated by the moment's diversion.

"Lord Summertown's quite hopeless," laughed Yolande. "If *I* were on the point of going out to fight, I shouldn't be as cheery."

"I must have m-met him at Ripley Court," said Felix reflectively. "He s-seemed to know my name. I *say!*" Once again the clock on Deryk's mantelpiece had caught his eye. "It's half past seven," he whispered to Yolande. "We must start some time."

Yolande nodded and walked up to Idina.

"It's quite clear Deryk won't be back till after dinner," she said. "The evenings are so light that one doesn't notice how late it's getting, but we really must go now, Dina, and we're going to take you with us."

There was an almost imperceptible struggle and a momentary stiffening of Idina's muscles; then she allowed herself to be led towards the door.

"I'm not frightened, Yolande," she protested. "What worries me a little bit is the thought that he may have been taken faint with no one at hand to help him."

"He couldn't be fainting *all* this time," Yolande assured her. "No, he's forgotten us and remembered something else, as he always does. One thing we might do is to telephone and see if the servants are there; then we can leave a message to say that we've taken you home with us."

After a short search Felix found the telephone number on the flyleaf of a shorthand note-book.

"I'd better do this," said Yolande, taking the instrument into her own hands. "Regent 484726—yes, please." After a short pause her face became animated with expectancy. "Is that Regent 484726? Is Sir Deryk Lancing at home?—Sir Deryk Lancing. Isn't that his house? Oh, I'm sorry! Ring off, please." She depressed the receiver-clip for a moment and turned to her companions. "The hall porter at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, mildly surprised but very paternal—sort of 'What-can-you-expect-of-a-woman? She-*would*-get-a-wrong-number.' Hello! You gave me a wrong number. R-r-regent 484726—Please— Not yet — Not yet. Give another ring, will you?— Not yet. Oh, it doesn't matter; I don't suppose there's anyone at home."

She hung up the receiver and rose to her feet.

"No reply of any kind. There's no one there. Come home to dinner, friends."

As a final concession to Idina, they went once more into Pall Mall and once more inspected the forbidding front door. In the gathering dusk the house looked larger and more deserted than ever, and its sense of inviolability was enhanced by the presence of a large policeman in the doorway. Yolande at once asked whether a gentleman had been seen coming out or going into the house. The constable shook his head. He had been there for a quarter of an hour; the house, of course, was unoccupied at present, but it was full of furniture, and he fancied that he had heard a noise, as though some one had knocked over a table. He had therefore taken up his position at a point where he could command both front and side doors.

"And no one has come out?" Idina asked him again.

"Not while I've been here, Miss."

Idina felt that any further delay, any more outward expression of uneasiness would make an unjustifiable demand of her companions' patience. Turning to Yolande with a forced smile, she nodded her willingness to start.

"But why won't you and your husband dine with me?" she asked, as Felix signalled to a taxi. "We're too late to dress, but that won't matter in August, on the eve of war.

I'm housekeeper enough to know that it isn't fair to bring in extra people on the last of three Bank Holidays running. Do come! Then we'll ring Deryk up later on and find where he really did get to."

They set out for Idina's hotel without further delay. There, as everywhere in London that night, they found an indefinable air of arrested progress; everyone seemed to have been kept in town unexpectedly or summoned back at short notice. From the tables round them rose a babel of amateur strategy and disjointed history—"Take Bismarck. . . . Take what happened over Schleswig-Holstein. . . . The enveloping tactics of Sedan. . . . The Germans are sure to have some surprise up their sleeves. They did in '66 and again in '70—breach-loading versus muzzle-loading, machine guns as against rifles, all that sort of thing. But we may have some surprises too; they may find they've bitten off more than they can chew, in the old phrase. I was talking to a man in the War Office only last week. . . . Our army's by no means what it was before we had our lesson in South Africa. . . ."

When dinner was over Idina telephoned to Deryk at his rooms and at the County Club.

"I don't feel it's any use ringing up the house," she said. "I know he wasn't going to sleep there to-night. We'll wait and try him later at his rooms. I'm afraid you must think me very absurd and cowardly," she apologised with sudden contrition. "I suppose the excitement of the last few days has been rather trying, and this is the form that it takes with me. Now we won't talk about it any more."

They agreed to remain together until the moment when the time limit of the ultimatum to Germany expired. When they found, however, that this involved spending another silent hour in each other's company, the prospect lost much of its charm. Yolande with more fine spontaneity suggested their walking round to the Russian Embassy to see whether any demonstration was being made; they mingled with a grave, almost subdued crowd in Chesham Place and then walked on to Albert Gate. A few knots of idlers were clustered outside the French Embassy, but the traffic of Knightsbridge did not admit of crowds' collecting. A few minutes before eleven they returned to the hotel and stood on the pavement waiting for the hour to strike.

"It's like seeing in the New Year," murmured Idina.

"Or—seeing out the old one," Yolande answered slowly. "I wish—oh! I *do* wish I knew what was going to happen!"

"I think I'll just have one more try to catch Deryk," said Idina, as she turned into the hotel. "Don't go till you hear whether I've caught him."

4

As the tarpaulin gently subsided and flattened, Deryk dusted the palms of his hands, one against the other, and walked downstairs with the teeth of his lower jaw so drawn back over their fellows of the upper that an expression of truculent defiance was unintentionally produced. Only when he reached the hall and began to stalk melodramatically towards the front door did he discover that he was in shirt-sleeves.

The only possible thing was to go upstairs and fetch his bloody coat. It *was* a bloody coat, everything was bloody. Here was he, ready to die of spontaneous combustion like that fellow in Dickens—Tulkinghorn, was he? In the book about the Circumlocution Office and Jarndyce *versus* Jarndyce—*Bleak House,* of course! Charles Dickens at his best mentally, but at a low third-best physically—a tired, depressed Dickens. But all this was a generation old, and he did not want to let fall literary-society criticisms of great works. Yet literary "shop" kept him from watching the progress of his own symptoms. And these absurd artificial discussions kept him away from the major discussion about that bloody coat. The word was not polite; admitted. But at times it was the only word, which bore out his age-old contention that opportunity was the equivalent, no more and no less, of virtue. Deryk put his hands into his pockets and began to walk upstairs again in search of the coat. As once before, when he was delirious with influenza, he was saying he knew not what and embarking on endless disputatious controversies which he was mentally unequal to following. What was the absurd phrase he had just used—opportunity the equivalent of virtue? It seemed so profound when he used it; now, when he was awake again, he could see the meaningless folly of it. Really, it was rather disconcerting when your brain took forty winks like that. . . .

Once back on the roof he remembered the earlier sense that he was throwing away a rare opportunity. Why? It was an extraordinary thing, but he felt no fear. Yet why should he feel fear? Nor irritation, for that matter. Now, downstairs (when he had that ridiculous altercation about the coat) he was in a condition of what he always described to himself as "prickly heat"; his nerves seemed to stretch, stretch, stretch and finally snap; then he was like a man flayed alive! He could cry out if anyone spoke to him or touched him, even kindly; he could not bear himself, he did not know what he wanted, but he had at such times to get away to solitude lest he did irreparable injury. Always in that mood he was ready to be rude, satirical, wounding (he had said things to Lucile Welman which cut her like a lash across the face); thank God! he had managed to hang up the receiver, or run away and hide, when he had been with Idina; she only knew him as abrupt and variable, she had never seen him savage.

He never knew what brought on these attacks. That afternoon (as soon as his god-forsaken guests had left him in peace) he had been quite tranquil and contented; only when he considered the question of re-joining them did the "prickly heat" assail him, and then he had stood in the hall, tensely but vacantly blaspheming—like an angry child yelling because it had to yell. And then he had started an absurd discussion with himself about "Bleak House" . . . Prickly heat: spontaneous combustion—He was by no means sure that it *was* Bleak House. . . .

Deryk became more interested in himself than ever before. When he succumbed to "prickly heat," when his lips or brain began babbling irrelevancies, the plain fact of the matter was that he was not in full control of himself. He was—delirious, to use a non-committal word; delirious in the daytime, when he was well, sober, awake. For anything that he said or did at such a time he was not responsible; and these periods of delirium were becoming more frequent, though he could not remember when they started. . . . Now, had he inherited this from his father, had he originated it in himself? Was "it" really anything at all? In other words, was there a strain of insanity or was he only once more in a state of nervous collapse? His father had never shewn anything but a desolatingly sane and level mind—with the exception of that one moment when *he* contemplated suicide. (You could not call that an inherited tendency to self-destruction.) Well, was his blood tainted? Was this another legacy? It was perfectly possible: nobody ever told you about this sort of thing. . . .

Or had he brought the whole thing on himself? The last eighteen months had been a greater strain than anyone could bear; for the first six he had worked twelve and eighteen hours a day for seven days a week, he had taken to brandy-drinking in the early morning and things of that kind; then came the smash over Dina's marriage (probably that was the beginning: he met Yolande out at a dance somewhere and was extraordinarily rude to her: "prickly heat" again. Yes, she tried to be sympathetic and actually touched his hand—*then* he could have killed her, quite calmly and deliberately). Thereafter came the hideous months when he lived like a brute with Lucile Welman, trying to forget; then his father's death, his own collapse, the Hellenopolis diversion (it was a pity that had failed; he was really well, really sane out there); then this house, bought, swept and garnished like the transformation scene in a pantomime; then Dina's return. . . . What human nerves the world over would stand the strain? He was worn out, worn out! And some imbecile at the

Club had told him that he seemed run-down, adding jocosely that he would be all right when he had a wife to look after him! Good God! if Dina were to try pillow-smoothing stunts with him! . . .

Poor Dina! Oh, poor child! She should be spared all he *could* spare her. *Now* he remembered that bit about feeling no fear. He had decided to commit suicide; and he was not afraid, not even regretful; that old self-pity business was a fake; he was not really losing anything, he had *done* everything, the future must all be repetition. No fear, no self-pity; what was the other thing? Oh, resentment. He was so sorry that he could not get all this down in black and white, because no intending suicide had ever thought so comprehensively nor pondered with so exquisite a balance. The imbeciles would bring in a verdict of suicide while of unsound mind, but he at least (who was the only person that mattered) knew that the poise of his brain was perfect and that he was reasoning in a form that psychologists for all time would offer the wealth of the world to obtain. He was the only *sane* man who had ever nerved himself to the point; and he proved his sanity by his amazing detachment, his incomparable faculty of self-analysis. He had got to "resentment"; did he blame anyone in particular? That is to say, one of the richest men in the world, with every social advantage, an admirable education, unusual scholarship, youth, health, and every other mundane blessing had somehow got himself into a position of personal entanglement or mental incompatibility of which suicide was the only solvent: on the assumption that "being" was at least generally pleasanter than "not-being," an explanation was required, perhaps even a defence.

In an enquiry of this kind, the nearer home you started, the quicker the success of your quest. It was not *his* fault; he had not been cheating at cards or otherwise forfeiting his personal reputation. He had not come to grief over money (how *could* he with that income?). He had not poisoned his blood nor brought a woman to disgrace or misery. The record was good; he had done not one of the things that impelled most men to suicide; what brought *him* to the same resolution was a sense that he had outgrown his liking for everything and, specifically, that he had ceased to love someone whom he had once loved. What was the reason of that? Who had changed? She was as he had always known her, as he had formerly loved her, only modified by the passage of a very few years and by the experience of a few months which had left her permanently subdued. He had changed more himself; he had lost chastity of spirit and body, he was bitterer, older, less tolerant, more restless; but he could trace no change of feeling towards her, there were only the pole at which he once thought that he could not live without her and the pole at which he found that he must. Who had converted him?

His father, of course, had tried—tried and failed. He had come to see that now; or, to be accurate (and just) his father had wanted him to suspend judgment until he knew his own mind. And thereto attached a great responsibility, for, if the marriage had taken place when he fell in love with Idina, he would never have wanted to be out of her sight. Sir Aylmer had separated them; on Sir Aylmer's shoulders rested the nervous and physical deterioration, the sudden discovery that he was no longer in love with her—the cogent sense that he must escape his obligation by some means; it was his father who had driven him to the point where he now stood. . . .

Now, this was where he felt so amazingly sane. Another man would have stamped and stormed, shaken his fists at Heaven—and shewn himself very foolish. Before condemning his father, he had to be satisfied first that his father had been wrong and secondly—though this was sentimental—that he himself would not have made the same mistake—or at least taken the same course, if their positions had been reversed. Well, Sir Aylmer was right to this extent: he saw in Idina a drag and an intellectual spendthrift, a woman who would never rise to her husband's social and economic position, let alone soaring above him to inspire and guide. Idina had many charming qualities, but no one would waste breath in defending her against that charge. And, if the positions were reversed, if he were moulding the destiny of his own sons—the case put so often since his father's extraordinary last letter of exhortation (so vague in its direction!) and veiled apology (so lacking in definition!)——

His reflections were interrupted by a bell ringing somewhere inside the house. At first he could not understand it; no bell existed above basement level; he was startled, and none the less so for his late afternoon of solitude. As the ringing continued he recognised the mechanical note of a telephone bell; the private exchange was on the ground floor, but the line was connected with one of the bedrooms. He hurried down, with just enough detachment to notice and smile at the compelling hypnotism which a telephone exerted over modern civilisation; ninety to one it was a wrong number, and, if the call were for him, he did not want to answer it; indeed he had not thought out all that was involved by supplying evidence that he was alive at this particular moment. This required thought and care. But he hurried downstairs, as though he had spent hours trying to get in touch with someone at the other end of the world on business of vital importance.

"Is that Regent 484726? Is Sir Deryk Lancing at home? Sir Deryk Lancing."

Deryk smiled. It was a good thing that Yolande's voice was so distinctive. He tuned his own to a throaty tenor, resonant with subservience.

"This is the Oxford and Cambridge Club, madam. I think you must have been given a wrong number."

He was walking upstairs, when the bell rang again. Obviously it was Yolande once more, but he would take no further risks. It was a nuisance—that telephone; it had broken the thread of his reflections, and they were no ordinary reflections, because—to notice the first and most obvious difference—he was sane, and other people were always a little prepossessed, fantastic. Now he must abandon speculation and return to the practical. There was something about an opportunity thrown away (curious how identity of place produced identity of thought; he always remembered that lost opportunity as he ducked his head and stepped out on the flat roof); it was like the thing that Dante found painted up over the entrance to the Inferno—"An opportunity awaits you here"; which, by the way, was not what Dante found, but seemed a plausible substitute. There was a strange critical faculty in the human brain, which seemed the first to doze and the last to rouse; when you were asleep your imagination rioted, there was nothing to keep it in check, you delivered speeches of surpassing eloquence and only discovered what nonsense you were talking when you—and the critical faculty—awoke. Just before you returned to full consciousness, the imaginative and the critical played side by side, you made a misquotation and knew it to be a misquotation, even though it were an improvement on the original; it was like poor Alice reciting, when everything would go *wrong* and she knew it was wrong, but crocodiles would keep pressing forward when she wanted to talk about busy bees. Curious brain Carroll must have had. . . .

More literary small change? . . .

It came to this, then; he was funking it. He was arguing and thinking—pretending that some value attached to his fugitive reflections—when his whole mind ought to have been concentrated on that opportunity. He was, to be quite frank, waiting for a reprieve; someone would telephone, another search party would come and beat on the door. . . . Good God! if he left it much longer, the opportunity would be gone; his housekeeper would be arriving with a girls' school of servants, the wonderful solitude and silence would be ravished. And, to be accurate, he was not funking it; it was not fair to say that he was funking it; it was very unkind; he was hesitating between rival methods, that was all. He had to decide, before anything else, when the tragedy had taken place; he could not leave nearly three hours unexplained, so the tragedy had better be timed for the moment when Idina and the Manistys were out of earshot. Unstrapping his wrist-watch he put the hands back to half-past five—and wondered whether anything would remain of the watch when he had done. Then he pulled away the tarpaulin a second time and dragged the planks aside. . . .

To what extent would his subconscious will get in his way? Older than the oldest man, there was an instinct of self-preservation which refused to be coerced; if you were in a motor smash and saw the other car in time, you always ducked your head, like a tortoise getting back under its shell, and put your arm up to guard your eyes; a woman always tried to protect her bosom; it was the untaught lesson of a million years. (Curious to trace the forgotten origin of these gestures! Why, when people were amused, did their eyes half close, their cheeks expand? Of course, Herbert Spencer used to say that people frowned when they were angry, because primitive man, scrapping with a neighbour and getting hit over the head, had to twist his brows into a single ridge to prevent the blood running into his eyes. A bit thin!) Well, it was almost impossible to fall flat backwards; as you began to lose your balance, one foot always went out to buttress you from behind. There was a fellow at his tutor's who managed it and would fall down again and again without hurting himself; other people could not even when they tried on a mattress. So with swimming. There was a fellow in one of Stevenson's books—"The Ebb-Tide"—who dived into the lagoon and swam a few strokes with the idea of stopping suddenly and sinking like a stone. He tried, but it was no good; automatically the arms started working again, he had to go on till he reached the shore. And next day, when he was covered by Herrick's rifle, he refused to put up his hands and begged to be shot—*begged*: but he could not stop swimming. By the way, it was Attwater who had the rifle, of course; Herrick (or Hay) was the fellow who tried to drown himself. A thing about that book which he never understood was how the cockney clerk had managed to keep a jar of vitriol among his personal effects throughout a steady course of degradation in outlying parts of the Pacific, when he hadn't a thing to eat and was starving on the beach while the Captain begged stamps from the Consulate. It looked very much like a slip on Stevenson's part, comparable with that other curious slip in "The Master of Ballantrae," where one of the brothers at the end of the duel plunged his rapier up to the hilt in ground which you had just been told was frozen. Stevenson had admitted that he had been nodding there. . . .

Deryk spun round and stamped up and down the roof, cursing in language which he had never used since he was a foul-mouthed school-boy of fourteen. He was funking, funking!! The moment he tried to concentrate his mind on *action,* something carried him away to futile discussions of books. This time—— He looked at his watch. A quarter to six. He had forgotten what the time was before he moved the hands; it might be eight, nine—— There was no sun to guide him. The servants would be coming in at any moment. This time. . . .

The fellow across the road was starting the Marseillaise again—as badly as ever. In a way this was rather like Nana dying of small-pox, while people rushed up and down the streets of Paris, shouting "A Berlin!"

Literature again!

He thrust his left thumb into his mouth and bit in speechless rage until he could bear the pain no longer. Then he looked at the result. The skin was still unbroken.

A single dry sob of misery shook him.

5

It was only a question how much noise he would make. . . .

He stole to the parapet and looked down. It must be getting late, because the soldiers in uniform were being outnumbered by men in evening dress on their way out to dinner. There had been no second search party; the others must have gone home. He wondered when they would hear about it—and how. His servants, of course, would tell the police, and every paper, every news-bill would be full of it. How would they take it, what would they think had *really* happened? What was the impression that he had left on their minds by his general behaviour that afternoon? Everything depended on that, and the coming stratagem that was forming in his mind was so much wasted ingenuity if they had thought him abnormal. It might be a petty thing, people who had not been in the same position might call him self-conscious or pernickety, but, if you looked at it reasonably, if words had any meaning, why *should* a man be called insane when he was not only positively sane but relatively far more sane than his neighbours?

Hatherly would be rather broken up, but he would be the last man to suspect.

Raymond would not hear about it for months—not until the war was over and he was released from his fortress. Then he would find himself in unconditional possession of a trifle over twenty million pounds (and be damned to him! let him see what *he* could do with it!), and the whole tragedy would be so long past by them, and he would find no one with whom to exchange and compare suspicions; otherwise it was awkward, because old Raymond was a shrewd fellow. But the money would keep *his* mind occupied. . . .

People *would* regard it as a tragedy—young, rich, popular, good-looking, on the eve of being married; he was getting to know the personal touch of the press, he could foretell the exact form of the obituary notice, and in thirty-six hours the little cuttings on their yellow slips would be pouring in on him from his agency. At least, not on *him;* they would come addressed to him; it was rather curious to think of letters coming in after it was all over, of a hundred and one subsidiary wheels still revolving when the piston was motionless in its cylinder. People would finger the envelopes, wondering who had the right to open them; and in the end Hatherly would have to dispose of them. Poor old Hats! he was becoming official undertaker to the family, and he was so touchingly proud of the whole creation—the estate, the house, the title, Sir Aylmer, himself. And Hats would not be the only person to miss him. . . .

That noise question had to be decided. It had no bearing on the great problem of accident against design; if he brought the house tumbling about his ears, *that* was still unaffected, but he did not want to make a noise, he did not like the idea of a crowd collecting and inquisitively prying into the hall while a solid young policeman sucked a stump of pencil and took notes. After all, it was *his* body; why the Hell should these damned outsiders be allowed to come and satisfy their morbid curiosity by staring at him? He must not make a noise, not enough even to attract the solid young policeman who was even then cutting short his conversation with one of the Marlborough House sentinels. . . . And, when he started, he must go quickly; there was no question of fear yet, but he would indubitably lose his nerve if he waited; it was like hesitating before a high dive. God! it was remarkably like!!

Deryk kept his eyes averted from the opening in the roof as he took stock of his position. The unfinished sketches were scattered in a half circle of crumpled balls, his coat lay where he had thrown it across the frame of the new skylight; the planks were neatly piled, the tarpaulin was beside the planks. He picked up the coupling rope and caught it in a loose knot round one ankle—not too tight to give him away, not loose enough to slip and spoil his effect. As he drew himself upright, the whole world seemed to be standing still; he had a crazy sense that nothing stood between him and the gigantic, unseen God in whom he had been taught to believe as a boy; London, never before silent even in the night, was silent now and airlessly hot, so that he could hardly breathe.

He walked quickly to the round opening and stood poised at the edge with his eyes closed and his pulses hammering until he felt that something must burst. The eyes had to open, to see that the rope was free. Then, closing them again, he took a single step forward.

A stifled cry broke from his lips when he tried, too late, to recover his balance.

19 January, 1918.

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